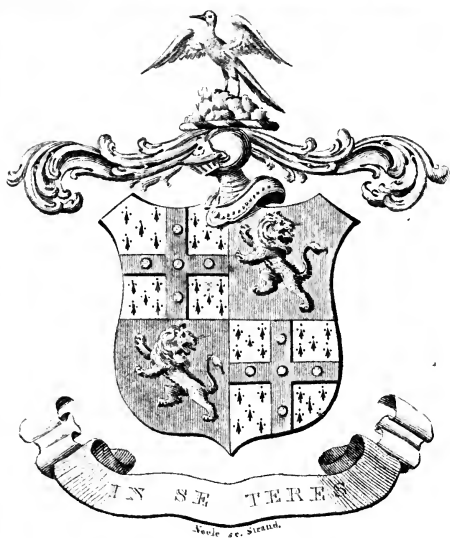


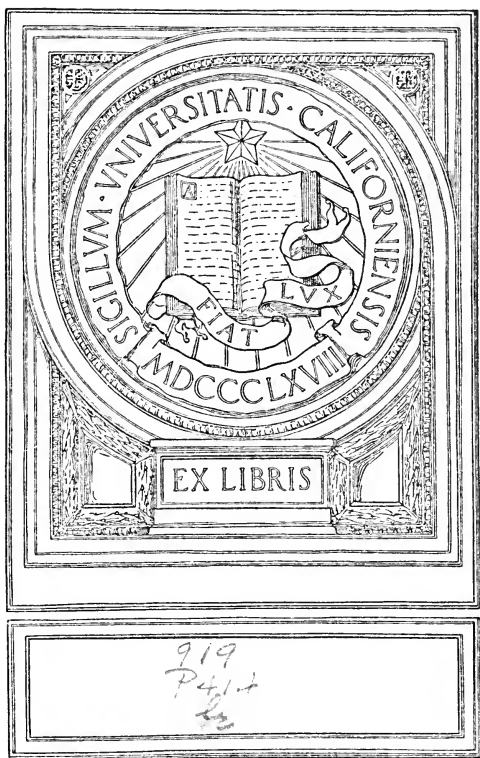
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JAMES ST. AUBYN.



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9

BRITAIN'S HISTORICAL DRAMA;

A SECOND SERIES OF

National Tragedies,

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND RELIGIOUS
INSTITUTIONS OF DIFFERENT ERAS IN BRITAIN.

BY

J. F. Pennie
J. F. PENNIE.

“Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all poems. The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the text of Holy Scripture. Therefore men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought able to compose a Tragedy.”—MILTON.

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INTRODUCTION.

IF, in this enlightened age, there still exist any lingering prejudice against Dramatic Poems, it arises, no doubt, from their supposed connexion with the Stage; and if such moral and philosophic writers as Milton, Thomson, Mason, Milman, Graham, and Mrs. Joanna Baillie, have not yet been able wholly to eradicate all groundless objections, it would be unavailing for us to argue against them. The best confutation we can advance, must be found in the innocence, morality, and usefulness of the Historical Dramas themselves, which we submit to the judgment of the Public. We will, however, quote a noble defence in favour of ancient and modern fiction, written by that learned and pious historian, Mr. Sharon Turner.

“ Fictitious compositions are so many concentrations of the scattered virtues of life; so many personifications of whatever is amiable and admirable in the manners or conceptions of the day. We may, indeed, say that most of the romances of our forefathers were advantageous, in some respect or other, to the progress of their social life. In every one some vice is made revolting, and some virtue interesting. It is probable that our best romances and tales have been, on the whole, nearly as efficacious in their moral operations as our sermons and our ethics. They have, at least, been great auxiliaries: society would not have been what it is without them. It is the fault of

INTRODUCTION.

the artist, not of his art, if his fictions be either unuseful or pernicious. . . . Fictitious narratives have been highly useful, and may be more so. We all need tuition as much as we dislike it; it may therefore be welcomed from every quarter, and particularly when it comes accompanied by harmless emotion and intellectual delight. Let us only urge our minstrels and fableurs to make their own ideal beauty as excellent as they can, before they embody it to our sight. . . . From the natural desire of reputation, every man performs the task which he allots to himself as ably as he can; and as the great preponderance of nature is always to good, society has been, on the whole, perpetually a gainer by the romances, tales, poetry, and dramas of its authors, notwithstanding the alloy of some individual eccentricities.”*

The flattering and cheering manner in which the First Series of this National Work was received by a certain portion of the Public, has been one great stimulus to our exertions in the production of a second volume; and we trust that, in its execution, it will not be found that we have merited less forbearance, kindness, and encouragement, than have been shown to our first attempt; particularly when we state that it has been accomplished under domestic afflictions unusually severe and trying.

* History of the Middle Ages.

THE ENGLISH SLAVE;

OR,

THE EVE OF ST. BRICE.

A TRAGEDY.

“Thy castle yet,
Sweet Lyd, remains, of all the dwellings fair
That clustered once upon thy marge. Alas!
Profoundest silence reigns where rolled the voice
Of business on the fitful wind. No more
The crowded mart, the echoing street, where flowed
The human stream along.—

The grave has closed
Upon thy myriads, Lydford: nought remains
Of thee and thine but that frail lonely pile,
Sole relic of thy ancient glory, where
Proud floating o'er the battlements, thy sons
Once gave the banner to the breeze.”

CARRINGTON'S DARTMOOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SAXONS.

GONDABERT, Earl of Devon.

LORD EDGAR, his Son.

ALBERT, the Slave.

HAROLD, Seneschal of the Household.

OTHMAR, Captain of the Retainers and Guards.

ELFILIA, a supposed Bondmaid.

EDITHA, a Neif, or Bondwoman.

BRITONS.

DUKE OF CORNWALL.

RODERICK, Captain of the Banditti.

1st Robber.

2nd Robber.

DANES.

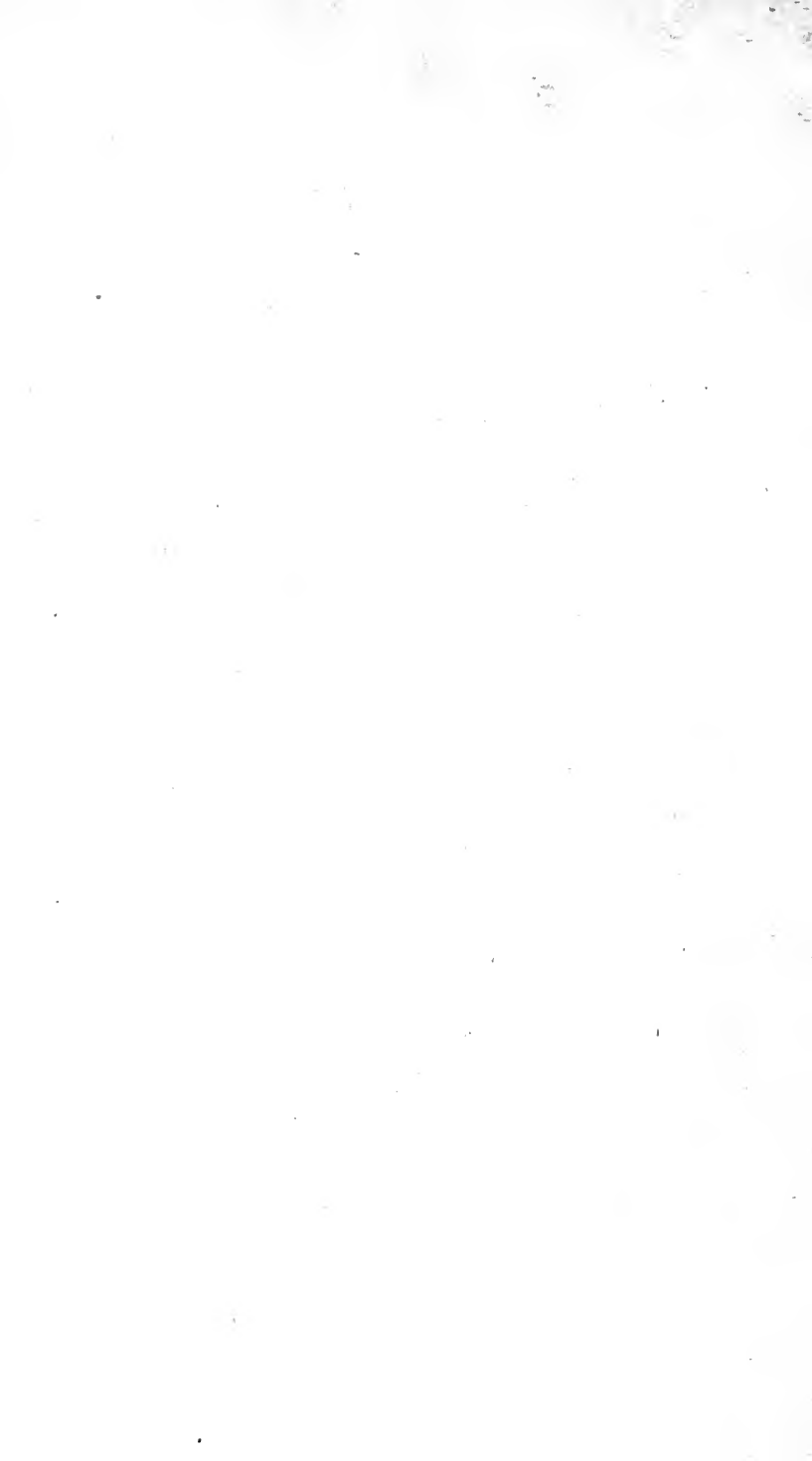
ROGVALLA, a Sea-king or Pirate.

CATHIMAR,	}	Danish Chiefs.
IVOR,		
FROTHO,		

EVANDA,	}	Captives to Gondabert.
BERTHA,		

Saxon and Danish Soldiers, Peasants, Robbers, and Attendants.

ERA—1002.



THE ENGLISH SLAVE.



ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Interior of a miserable Cottage.*

Enter Editha and Albert.

EDITHA.

ST. Cuthbert save us ! what can ail thee, boy,
To be so testy, wayward, cross, and peevish ?
Some fearful spirit of the stormy moor,
Which thou dost ever haunt, hath on thee cast
An evil eye ; or the night-roaming hag,
Crossing thy path, bewitched thee !

ALBERT.

Mother, no—

I love to wander when the tempest howls
O'er Dartmoor's lonely wilds, for then I seem
To breathe the mountain air of liberty :
I the fierce stag love to companion where
The herds in freedom rove, for then I seem
To be as free as they : I love to climb
The eagle's granite throne, and see him wave
His broad wings to the wind, for then I feel
As if I from my limbs had dashed the chains
Of loathsome bondage, and, like that proud bird,
Were master of myself.

EDITHA.

Now goodness keep me !

Why, Albert, should thine ever-restless mind
Indulge such vain desires ? Win thou content,
And in thy humble lot, though hard it be,
Thou 'lt find some happiness.

ALBERT.

None, never, none,
While I behold the stern usurping Thane,
In splendour clad, tread like a god the earth,⁽¹⁾
And frown me into nothing ! Why should he
Have all things at command, while I must wear
These sordid weeds, and toil, yoked to the plough,⁽²⁾
For food his dogs would scorn ?

EDITHA.

The saints assoil thee !

Why, Albert, where hast thou picked up such treason
Against thy high-born betters ?

ALBERT.

Why my betters ?—

In what are they my betters ? True, they feed
From trenchers loaded with the daintiest cheer
The garden, forest, flood, and harvest yield ;⁽³⁾
Furred robes they wear, bedizened o'er with gold⁽⁴⁾
And dazzling pebbles, bought with blood of slaves ;
Curb fiery steeds, in costly trappings decked ;
Grasp in their hands a spear, the sign of freedom,⁽⁵⁾
And on their ring-bound fingers bear a hawk,
None daring to command them ;—but are they
In aught else, mother, better than myself ?

EDITHA.

Why should that bosom harbour such proud thoughts,
So ill-beseeming thy low state in life ?

ALBERT.

Has not this bosom passions like to theirs?
Have I not speech like them? Was I not born
A man, an Englishman, and hath not God
As brightly on my forehead stamped his image,
As on the proudest Thane's? And yet for me
To touch the tuneful harp, to grasp a spear,
And in the forest with a falcon sport,
Are crimes deemed worthy stripes and banishment. ⁽⁶⁾
O, I could curse the day that gave me birth!

EDITHA.

Nay, good my child——

ALBERT.

Why didst thou bring me forth
To be a slave? Why was thy womb not barren?
Why died I not before I saw the light?
Thyself a bond-slave, thou shouldst, knowing all
The miseries of a state so vilely base,
Have strangled me, even in the porch of life;
Or, wanting strength, have bade my father dash
My brains out on his threshold. That had been
Paternal kindness to me.

EDITHA.

Blessed Virgin!
Art thou distraught with passion? O, what strange
And fearful beings hast thou on the moor
Held parley with?

ALBERT.

Those, mother, who amid
Its stony caves and fairy-haunted woods
Dwell free as the wild bull, making the great ones
To their dominion crouch: and if ere long

I gain not freedom, man's eternal birthright,
I'll join the gallant band, and then shall I——

EDITHA.

Mercy forbid ! Thy father was a slave,
So was his sire before him : they both lived
And died in honest bondage, and in peace.

ALBERT.

And *I* will die in freedom ! from these limbs
Bravely the fetters of bond-service fling,
And cast off slavery's badge ! No peace for me
Till this great work is done, till I can feel
I have a title to be ranked with men,
And wear its honest dignity with honour.
The lord of Lydford, Devon's high potent Earl,⁽⁷⁾
After long years of absence, to yon towers
This day returns, and with him Cornwall's Duke ;
Whose daughter, as I hear, will be the bride
Of Edgar, Devon's brave son. Mother, farewell ;
I'll to the castle—I must be among them.
I will do something there shall make strange stir—
I know not what——But from this doughty Earl
I'll win my freedom, or a hated life
Fling reckless to the winds !

EDITHA.

Stay, Albert, stay.

Thou art become so headstrong, fierce, and wild——

ALBERT.

What ! wouldst thou have me tamely bear these wrongs ?
Slavery and age have blunted all thy feelings,
And thou canst smile in chains ; but my young blood
Is all on fire t' achieve that sacred birthright,
That noble gift which Heaven on all bestows
But impious man denies——

I may be torn to-morrow from thine arms,
And in the market sold to some new lord ;
Or, by men-stealers borne beyond the seas,
Pine in far-distant lands. (8)

EDITHA.

O, it would break
My heart, wert thou sold from me.

ALBERT.

Ay, and now
Another passion stirs within this bosom.
Where is Elfilia ?

EDITHA.

In the forest, boy,
Keeping our herd of swine.

ALBERT.

O, how I love—
No words can tell how much I love that maid,
Who to our cottage came one stormy night,
And craved to share with us a home of bondage.
Her eye, when on its lashes hangs a tear,
Is like the azure violet, full of dew.
Her beauty—Pshaw ! I'm barren of all words
When I would praise her. Soon I'll make her mine.
A powerful spur is that to urge me on
To freedom's happy goal ; for while a slave
Were she my wife, this Earl might tear her from me,
And sell her to some merchant,—cursed thought !
Mother adieu ! I'll to thine arms return,
And thou no more shalt call thy son a slave.
I will be free—free from this galling badge,
Or we, dear mother, ne'er shall meet again. [Exit.

EDITHA.

Ah, I do love him e'en as if he were

Mine own begotten one. 'Tis twenty years—
More, by St. Cuthbert—since that boy was placed,
A little changeling, in my husband's arms
(As o'er our evening fire we sat) by some
Dark-visaged chief, who made us, trembling, swear
The boy should be as ours ; and ne'er to blab
In mortal ear the tale, till he again
Appeared to claim him. A foul-featured deed,
I ween, done in some quarter, save that he
Were a sweet child brought out of fairy-land.
No tidings since have come from that wild chief.
'Tis time this secret should be sent abroad :
How I have kept it here so long locked up,
I know not. But where stays the fair Elfilia ?
She is another mystery ! O, I'd give—
What would I *not* give, could I now but reach
The bottom of these secrets ! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A magnificent Hall in the Castle of
Lydford, hung with rich tapestry.* ⁽⁹⁾

Enter Evanda and Bertha.

EVANDA.

Stars of my destiny, when will ye cease
To pour your wrathful vials on my head !
How fatal was that battle-hour to me,
When on the southern coast of this great isle,
Which long hath trembled at the Northman's power,
The stalwart Earl of Devon, at midnight watch,
Assailed our slumbering camp, and to his ships
Rogvalla, Prince of Danish warriors, drove,
While I was sent a captive to these towers !

BERTHA.

Rather would I be in these splendid halls,
Than tossing to and fro wild on the deep,
The sport of storms and waves.

EVANDA.

Rather than sit

A pining slave within these Saxon walls,
I would be rushing in Rogvalla's barque,
Though mastless and unhelmed, o'er those dark seas
That round the northern cape, involved in storms,
Dash their broad-sheeted billows. [*Music within.*

BERTHA.

Hark ! heard you not

Those sweet sounds, lady, of a plaintive harp ?

EVANDA.

'Tis Edgar, son of Devon's stern-minded Earl,
Who waits his father's coming. Day and night
He, like a love-sick dreamer, to his harp
Is sighing tristful ditties.

BERTHA.

His soft strains

Perhaps are kindly, lady, meant to soothe
Your dull captivity.

EVANDA.

They soothe not me.

I'd rather hear the breakers' wolfish howl
Round the steep rocks of some deserted isle,
Or the wild shrieks of that fierce hag who rides
The midnight tempest, leading in her train
The witches and dark spirits of the north, ⁽¹⁰⁾
Than sweetest music in the stranger halls.

BERTHA.

How bright the morning shines. Will you not walk,

And breathe the freshness of the violet air
In yonder castle gardens ?

EVANDA.

No ; I hate
The very soil on which these Saxons tread.
More pleasant than this prison's garden bowers
Would be to me that island of the north, ⁽¹¹⁾
Where Nature silent lies in death-like sleep,
Mid horrors wonderful.

BERTHA.

Gods, keep me from them !

EVANDA.

Dark isle of storms, I loved at eve to stand
Amid thy desert vales and naked rocks,
And view the dreadful mountain heights around,
Crimsoning the skies with fire, while down their sides
Rivers of burning, smoking sulphur rolled ;
To gaze upon thy fountains, as they flung
Their boiling columns far into the heavens,
Circled with clouds, while their deep spirit-voices
Filled all the dreary solitude with sounds
As of a thousand thunders !—calling forth
The long-departed forms of warrior hosts
O'er the red firmament, bright in their pomp,
With gorgeous banners rustling to the blast,
And fearful din of arms ! ⁽¹²⁾

BERTHA.

O, may I, lady,
Ne'er look upon so terrible a sight.

EVANDA.

Great Odin, king of spells, hast thou decreed
That I shall my Rogvalla meet no more ?
If not on earth, triumphant shall we meet

In thy proud halls of glory. Ere this Earl
Shall to the altar lead me as his bride,
I'll set my spirit free, and by that act
Obtain a throne among our warrior gods.

BERTHA.

What though Rogvalla, o'erwhelmed by numbers,
Fled to his ships, doubt not of his return.

EVANDA.

When, my brave sea-king, shall I hear thy horn
Wail out its battle-summons round these towers !
When shall I see thy brand with Saxon blood
Red to the hilt, and in blest freedom roam
With thee again the bright and boundless deep !
[*Martial flourish.*
What sounds are those ? 'Tis not the Danish horn.

Enter Harold.

HAROLD.

Lady, I come with tidings which, I ween,
Thou with no welcome wilt from me receive.
The Earl of Devon approaches.

EVANDA.

As I feared.

HAROLD.

He and his warmen from their steeds alight
Without the castle gates. There also come
The British Duke of Cornwall and his daughter,
With many Danes, the captives of my lord.

EVANDA.

The purple plague come with him, and a curse
To blight his fondest hopes !—But there is peace.

HAROLD.

Lady, I wait to lead you to his presence

EVANDA.

Lead me where hungry wolves at midnight gather,
And howl for blood ; or in some darksome cave,
Where hideous reptiles o'er the slimy bones
Of the dead murderer crawl, let me be hid
For ever from the cheerful light of day,
Rather than at the bridal shrine become
The wife of Gondabert.—Be still, my heart,
There is a path to peace, though dark the way ;
And when the solemn hour of trial comes,
Odin shall nerve this arm to strike the blow
That ends all mortal suffering, and translates
My spirit to Valhalla's golden halls. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*The Outside of Lydford Castle.*

Enter a procession of Saxon soldiers bearing banners and trophies of war, then a train of Danish captives in chains. Enter, from the castle, maidens strewing flowers and bearing garlands ; then Edgar and Harold, leading Evanda, followed by Bertha and numerous domestic slaves of both sexes. Enter Gondabert, leading the Princess of Cornwall, followed by the Duke, with knights and guards. Gondabert presents the Princess to Edgar, who receives her with a respectful but melancholy air, and takes himself the hand of Evanda, whom he presents to the Duke, and then leads her forward, martial music playing the whole time.

GONDABERT.

When I behold thy beauty, I forget
The injuries and the sufferings of my country,
And with my laurel-garlands would entwine

The fairest rose of Denmark. 'Tis not meet
That sadness o'er thy brow of sunny beauty
Should fling one passing cloud, when I, returned
Triumphant to these towers, with eager hope
Claim the glad spousal rites. What cause for grief?

EVANDA.

Canst thou, proud victor, question me the cause
Of this deep sadness? Know, then, 'tis thyself!
Thou art the cause of all this heart endures,
And must endure long as thou keep'st me here.
I am a woman, and the sacred laws
Of honour and of knighthood bid thee yield⁽¹³⁾
Evanda to her country, home, and friends.
Think of my sufferings, and from hence permit
Thy captive to go free. Saxon renowned,
Act still the hero, still be nobly great
In mercy as in arms, and thou shalt win
A brighter wreath than garlands dyed in blood.

GONDABERT.

That night which on Devon's southern coast
The Saxon arms with glorious conquest crowned,
I waded deep in streams of Danish blood,
And hewed a passage through the pagan ranks
To where thou mid the war's harsh thunder stood'st,
Like a bright sunbeam on the stormy sea.
And shall I yield my sword-won captive up,
When love imperiously demands her stay?
No, this strong arm, which thro' that death-strewed field
Unfearingly o'er chiefs and ocean-kings,
Rolled in their blood, did bear thee, shall ere long,
Beloved Evanda, lead thee to the altar.

EVANDA.

Saxon, forbear! Though now on fortune's sea

Thy barque in triumph rides, and all thy sails
With the pride-soothing breath of fame are filled,
And green the laurels on thy lofty brow,
Yet, if thou play the tyrant, soon will come
The fearful tempest in its darkness forth :
Then shalt thou perish, and thy storm-rent wreaths
Oblivion on the rushing blast shall hurl.

GONDABERT.

Maid of the north, thy prophecies I fling
All to the winds—I was not born to fear.

EVANDA.

That brow of stern disdain shall yet wax pale.
Proud Thane, there is an arm that o'er thee hangs—
I see it in the heavens, 'tis red with vengeance.
Ha ! dost thou quail beneath my searching eye ?
My mother knew the deep thoughts of the heart,
And her prophetic spirit is upon me.—⁽¹⁴⁾
That arm shall smite thee ! Yes, the time draws near,
The hour of awful judgment is at hand
For some dark, secret crime——

GONDABERT.

Sound, sound the warlike trump,
And let the thunder of the full-braced drum,
With harp and pipe, the martial chorus swell :
Then strike the bridal notes of joy, and wide
The portals of my castle fling, to welcome
Our regal guests of Cornwall. Warriors, on !

CHORUS.

Hail, warriors, whose victorious brands
Have routed Denmark's savage bands,
And driven her few remaining slaves
Across the ocean's storm-dashed waves.

Ye Virgins, swell the choral lay,
Strew garlands bright in the conqueror's way;
Loose on the winds your banners fling,
Strike, strike the harp's triumphant string;
And to these scenes of festive joy,
Where pleasure and mirth the hours employ,
Welcome, welcome beauty bright,
True Valour's just reward, young Love's delight.

[*Gondabert leads the Cornish Princess into the castle, the Duke takes the hand of Evanda.—All the characters follow, except Harold and Edgar; the latter stands in a thoughtful and despairing attitude.*

EDGAR.

Marry this British princess? Rather let me
Be wedded to despair, and madness seize
On all my faculties! The ducal crown
May from her brows flash forth its diamond fires,
As through the frosty night the clustered stars
Shine out resplendently; but this firm heart
They cannot warm to love. A brighter eye
Than hers hath on me sweetly beamed, and here
Lit love's eternal flame.

HAROLD.

Ha! youthful lord,
Art thou already stricken with this Duchess?

EDGAR—(*not heeding him.*)

Yet, Elfilia,
Thou art—O, that accursed, horrid word
Dies on my lips!—a slave!—a peasant slave!
If ever I become the Thane of Devon,
She on my vassals freedom shall bestow. ⁽¹⁵⁾

I'll have no slaves to till my fields, and make
Them barren with their curses.—But, loved maid,
How to secure thee from my father's wrath?—
Ah, Harold! Thou art more my friend than servant—
O, I am greatly troubled.

HAROLD.

Good my lord,
I thought you were the happiest of the happy.

EDGAR.

No, the most wretched living. Come thou near.
This is no longer any place for me;
I must depart, fly hence this very night,
To some far-distant country.

HAROLD.

Nay, my lord,
Are you beside yourself?

EDGAR.

Well nigh, good Harold.

HAROLD.

Fly hence, when on the eve of bridal joy?
When you should wed a lady, whose fair hand
Will on her bridegroom place the starry robe
Of sovereignty and power?

EDGAR.

I'd rather wear
The savage clothing of the new-slain wolf,
And in the cavern of some desert live,
Whose sands the foot of man hath never trod,
Than in Dunheved's princely palace dwell
With Cornwall's daughter.

HAROLD.

Thou dost much amaze me.

EDGAR.

Thy truth I've proved—then aid me to escape.
I know the lofty spirit of my father,
His fierce ambition, which would sacrifice
The young affections of this ardent heart ;
His stern relentless curses they will fall,
When I am gone, on my devoted head ;
Yet I'll endure all miseries,—all but one,
The loss of her I love. Come in with me—
I'll call thee friend and brother. Farewell pomp !
To pathless wilds and deserts must I fly :
If here I tarry, madness is my doom ! [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A pleasant Valley on the borders of the Forest of Dartmoor ; lofty and barren Mountains in the back ground.*

Enter Elfilia.

ELFILIA.

How am I changed ! Erewhile in splendid robes,
Mid bannered halls and gorgeous pomp, I moved
Gaily and proudly ; while the air I breathed
Was rich with odours and harmonious sounds
Of harps and viols. Now, in these coarse weeds,
I am the slave of slaves. Yet have I pomp ;
The golden skies of morn are o'er these vales
That shelter me outspread, where every grove
Is filled with melodies, and soft the winds
Breathe of the rose and violet. More than all,
Peace in yon humble cottage with me dwells,
And love makes blessed this delightful valley.
Then why should I regret my once proud home,
From which a father's sternness drove me forth
To shun the bridal bed of one I hated,
Though round his princely brows flashed ducal wreaths.
[*Music at a distance.*

It is my Wilford's harp. Enchanting sounds !
Yet is he lowly born, while boast my veins
The noblest blood in England ; but with him,
Caverns would be to me as kingly halls.

Enter Edgar, disguised, with a harp.

EDGAR.

My loved, my own Elfilia. [*Embracing.*

ELFILIA.

Ah, my Wilford,
Thou art not what thou seem'st. No peasant slave
Dares with toil-roughened hand the harp-strings sweep;
Or if he dared, could with thy skill and fire
Master the gentle craft.

EDGAR.

My birth have I,
To prove her love, concealed, and must not yet
Disclose the truth—(*aside*). Thy Wilford is no slave.
My father to the house of Gondabert
Was a retainer, and held lands in fee; ⁽¹⁶⁾
To whom a cuirass, helm, and sword were given
As a reward for valour. But I loved,
From childhood loved the poet's heaven-born art;
I panted for immortal fame, and strove,
Despite all scorn, reproof, and cold neglect,
To win the bard's high honours.—E'en my dreams ⁽¹⁷⁾
Were wild imaginings of sweet romance,
And visions bright of genius triumphing
O'er envy and oppression; till at length
My harp won Gondabert's indulgent ear,
And I became his minstrel.

ELFILIA.

Canst thou, then,
With the green laurels of thy genius crowned,
Stoop from thy height to love a wretched slave?

EDGAR.

O, cast not on thy beauty such a cloud;

'Tis darkness on the sun. Thou wouldst adorn
Earth's mightiest throne ! Away, then, all sad thoughts,
For ere to-morrow's eve-clouds dim the west,
Thou shalt be free, and in these arms a bride.

Enter Albert.

ALBERT.

So, my young harper, thou art here again !
I've marked thy frequent visits to our valley ;
And now I learn thine errand. Hie thee hence,
And leave this maid to me.

EDGAR.

To thee, base slave !

ALBERT.

Hah ! how that word falls on me with a curse,
And to my heart-core burns like glowing iron !
I am no slave !—at least I shall not be,
Proud youth, ere long. I will be free as thou,
Or e'en the haughtiest lord that treads the soil ;
And though desertless now, I'll bravely wrest
From Gondabert my liberty, or fling
This carcass to the eagles of the moor.

ELFILIA.

Nay, Albert, thou to me hast still been kind,
And gentle as a brother. What hath stirred
These stormy feelings in thy bosom thus ?
And why that brow of wrath ?

ALBERT.

My wrongs, my sufferings !

Long have I borne them, and in secret long
Brooded o'er my despair, as on the mountain
The heavy tempest lours, till came thy beauty

Shedding its brightness through the cloud and gloom ;
Then all the barren desert of my mind
Shone out with golden light : thy tuneful voice
Fell on my soul more sweet than forest lays,
That make the wild moor pleasant. Like the torrent,
When genial spring-suns melt the torpid ice,
My wild heart leaped with hope, and bounded on
In sparkling, boisterous gladness for the land
Of sunny freedom ; and that bourn I'll reach,
Though giant rocks and mountains intervene ;
No bar the roaring cataract shall stop
Of my proud feelings, till I reach the shore
Of liberty's bright ocean.

ELFILIA.

Hear me, Albert.

ALBERT.

Hear thee ? Ay, give me but one soft, kind word,
And I will listen to the dove-toned sounds
Of thy sweet voice, like the pale silent moon
When the glad nightingale her wild love tells
In yonder myrtle bowers. And shall that minstrel,
That shallow-hearted boy, bear thee away
From these strong manly arms ?

ELFILIA.

Woe worth thee, Albert !

How will this end ?

ALBERT.

In death, if he persist.

I am a mountain-minded son of toil,
And let that twangling bard of sloth and pride
Beware the rover of the desert moor,
Strong as its iron rocks, and sternly fierce,
When moved with anger, as its own dark storms. (18)

EDGAR—(*casting away his harp.*)

Thou herd-groom ruffian, base-born mountain serf !
I scorn thy strength as I despise thy birth.
Dare but to raise thine eye, and cast a glance
Bright with love's passion on that peerless maid,
And I, who have the power, will make thee crouch
Like craven wolf when in the hunter's toils.

ALBERT.

Dare thou the thunder on those cloud-veiled rocks
To dash its red and fiery streams of death,
But dare not me to look on this sweet maid !
For I, though born a slave, would on her gaze,
Ay, and thus clasp her to my fearless heart,
Though England's crown were flashing on thy brows !

ELFILIA.

Albert, forbear.

EDGAR.

Hence, savage of the desert !
Or I will grapple with thee, till thy limbs
Fail to support thee to thy cavern lair.

ALBERT.

Grapple with me ? Fool ! I have on the moor
The gripe encountered of the hungry bear,
And with this clenched hand felled him : I have striven
With the fierce stag, and dashed him to the earth ;
And thus I'll trample on thy dainty form.

[*He rushes towards Edgar—Elfilia runs between them,
and in her endeavour to prevent Albert, a letter
drops from her bosom.*]

ELFILIA.

O, for the love of Heaven and all the saints,
Appease this dreadful anger. Albert—Wilford—
For my sake, I implore you, be at peace.

[*Music, with the cry of hunters at a distance.*]

EDGAR.

Distraction ! 'tis my father and the Duke,
Returning this way homeward from the chase.
O, disappointed vengeance ! If I stay
They will discover me, and I shall lose
My dear Elfilia—(*aside.*) Fly, thou dove-like maid,
The falcon is abroad ; I would not have
The Earl or Cornwall's Duke behold thee here.

ELFILIA.

The Duke of Cornwall ? All good angels save me !
O, I would fly to earth's remotest verge,
Rather than meet the Duke. Yet now to go,
And leave these lion-mettled spirits stirred
To wage a deadly strife——Nay, Albert, yield ;
Let my sad tears fall like the rain from heaven,
To cool thy bosom's fire-enkindled wrath.
Thus low on bended knee do I beseech
Thee, Albert, to withdraw.

EDGAR.

Rise, loved Elfilia,
Nor humble thus thyself before a slave.—
All must be told. Mark me, wild mountaineer ;
Though clad in minstrel vest, I am Lord Edgar,
Son of Devon's Earl ; and if thou darest,
Barren of honour and of warlike fame,
T' insult that maid with thy degrading passion,
Like a wild bull shalt thou be seized and sold
To those who traffic in the blood of men
Amid the slave-mart, and on foreign shores ⁽¹⁹⁾
A master find to tame thy daring spirit. [*Exit.*

ALBERT.

A brooklet in a storm ! Thy frothy rage
Flows idly by, and beggars my contempt ;

For come the worst, there's freedom in the caves
Of yon cloud-haunted tors, where strong bands lurk
Who fear no mortal thing. I know thee now,
And to the echoes of the rocks will shout
The treachery of thy heart. Elfilia, cast
The false one off, even as thou wouldst a snake
That on thy sleeping breast had coiled its folds,
Or he will sting thy soul. That lord to-morrow
The daughter of the Cornish sovereign weds.

ELFILIA.

Wed Cornwall's daughter ?

ALBERT.

Let me die unhouseled, ⁽²⁰⁾
If I speak not the truth. The Duke hath brought
His daughter, heiress of the western crown,
To Lydford castle, where the bridal feast
Is now preparing.

ELFILIA.

Ha ! all gracious Heaven !
No, Albert, no ; it cannot, cannot be—
Dwells, Wilford, in thy heart such cruel falsehood ?

ALBERT.

By the most holy rood-tree, by——

ELFILIA.

Swear not,
For I believe thee now. That deep disguise,
A borrowed name, and the deluding tale
Of his low birth—all, all confirm thy words,
Nor joy, nor hope on earth remains for me !
Fiend of despair, come fling thy moody spell
Wild on my brain, and let the tempest loose
To hurl me down the gulph of madness, where

Remembrance through the dark confusion sheds
No gleam o'er all the past !

ALBERT.

Elfilia, turn to me.

Here is a heart all truth, a heart that burns
With passionate feeling. Give me one bright smile,
And though it long hath been a dreary waste,
The wilderness into sunshine and with joy
Shall break forth into singing, and the flowers
Of hope bloom sweetly there.

ELFILIA.

What ! love a slave ?

ALBERT.

A curse eternal on the ashes rest
Of him who first his fellow-men enslaved !
He who yon kingly orb flung on the heavens,
And crowned the shadowy night with countless stars,
Made me a man equal in form and mind
With yon proud lord, who to the mart of slaves
Would drive me like a beast.—But be thou mine,
And I shall feel a new and mighty spirit
Uplift me, like the youthful eagle when
Her untried plumes expand to meet the sun,
Till fame and honour shed their glory on me.

[*Horns and cries near.*]

ELFILIA.

It cannot be.—Hark ! the proud hunters come !
O let me fly—

ALBERT—(*seizing her arm.*)

Beware of my revenge !

Thou shalt be mine, or I to Gondabert
Will thy stolen meetings with his son reveal.
And, by St. Edmund's bones ! here is a proof

[*Taking up the letter.*]

Which to the Earl, though I know not its language,
Will silently confirm, past doubt, my tale.

ELFILIA.

'Tis Wilford's—Edgar's letter ! Lost for ever !
O Albert, with compassion hear my prayers ;
And if indeed thou know'st what 'tis to love,
In pity to a maiden's weakness hide
Our hapless passion from the haughty Earl.
Prostrate I fall before thee. O, respect
My tears, my agonies. Restore that letter.

ALBERT.

Swear, then, on bended knee, to be my wife ;
Swear by all holy things——

ELFILIA.

To be thy wife ?
Eternal powers ! where shall I turn for hope ?
Woe comes on woe, the surges of despair
Rush o'er my sinking soul, and I must perish
If thou refuse to save. Albert, my fate
Is in thy hands ; on thee I call for mercy,
Mercy from him who has declared he loves me.
Canst thou behold these tears thy feet bedew,
Yet not relent ? Is there no spark of pity
In thy stern soul ? Wouldst thou accept the hand
Of her, whose breaking heart is far estranged
From all thy joys and cares ?

ALBERT.

Then let revenge,
Though it should in this bosom wake a hell
Of after anguish, yield a transient joy
Thy wilfulness denies. (*Horns and hunters very near.*)
They come, proud maid,
Famed Cornwall's Duke, and Devon's imperious lord !

ELFILIA.

Heaven, for thy mercy ! there is none on earth !
Remorseless man, hurl me from yonder rocks
Deep in the roaring torrent's black abyss,
Rather than let me meet—(*shrieks.*) Ha ! I behold him !
The hated, dreaded Duke.

ALBERT.

O, how it racks
My heart to see her thus.—Yet must it be,
Or blasted every hope that life can yield. [*Aside.*
Swear to be mine, and I will bear thee hence,
Where he shall never find thee.

ELFILIA.

O, faithless Edgar !
What fires are these which lighten round my brow ?
Madness is on my wild and burning brain !
Swear to be thine?—(*hesitates*)—thine ? Tortures,
racks, and flames
Shall sooner be my portion ! Monster ! fiend !
Dark savage of the moor, despair's dread curse
On thy last death-hour fall ! [*Rushes off.*

ALBERT.

The secret shall be told to win my freedom,
And then away—away to th' wildest depth
Of Dartmoor will I safely bear my love.

Music.—Enter Earl Gondabert and the Duke of Cornwall, with a train of hunters.

GONDABERT.

Right gallant spoil have we this day enjoyed
Amid the wilds of Dartmoor's regal forest.
That shag-maned bull, by our fierce dogs embayed,

Fought like a veteran warrior, till he fell,
Illustrious Duke, beneath thy well-aimed spear.

DUKE.

'Twas ever my delight at early dawn
To rouse the tusked boar, the wolf, and elk, ⁽²¹⁾
And make the vale and mountain forest ring
With cry of falcon, hound, and merry horn.
Such were my youthful sports, which schooled me well
In all the nobler duties of the soldier.

ALBERT.

I would presume with Devon's fame-honoured lord
To claim a private parley.

GONDABERT.

Who art thou ?

ALBERT.

I am a vassal, born on thy domains,
And something have to say, redoubted chief,
That much concerns thy honour.

GONDABERT.

Duke, lead on :

My train will to the castle's eastern gate,
Through yonder wood, conduct you.

[*Music.—Exeunt Duke and hunters.*]

Blood-stained ambition ! idol of my worship !
But one step more—the dukedom of the west—
On what a noble height shall I have placed,
In some brief hours, my loved and only son !

ALBERT.

My lord——

GONDABERT.

Let me but this long-laboured plan achieve,
Let me behold my gallant Edgar lead

The British princess to the bridal shrine,
And this glad heart——

ALBERT.

If I err not, 'tis like
Your hopes, my lord, will scurvily be crossed.
A princess? no; a bondmaid, who doth tend
A swine-drift in yon forest, is the choice
Of his aspiring aims. It moves my mirth
To think how all thy future heirs will be
Of mongrel breed,—half noble and half vile!
How in their veins such different blood may flow
Without eternal discord, I must leave
To thy far deeper knowledge.

GONDABERT.

I hear thy words, but gather not their meaning.

ALBERT.

They'll marry in despite of thee, if I——

GONDABERT.

Marry the devil, if thou wilt; what reck
I whom thou marriest? Doth thy bridal aught
Concern my honour?

ALBERT.

No; 'tis of Lord Edgar——

GONDABERT.

Well, what of him? What darest thou speak of him?

ALBERT.

O, nothing evil—only of his love——

GONDABERT.

Ay, for a princess——

ALBERT.

Princess of the hogs,
And maid of honour to my honoured mother.

GONDABERT.

Lord Edgar? maid of honour to thy mother?
Why thou art mad! or I, more mad than thou,
Of thy strange story make most strange disorder.

ALBERT.

Clear is the story as those sunny beams
That sparkle on Lydford's mountain flood,
If thou mar not its meaning. Thy young heir
A maiden woos who dwells here on the moor;
And for a princess is content to take
A lowly bond-wench to his bridal bed.

GONDABERT.

Lord Edgar woo a bondmaid for his bride!
Away, foul-spoken villain! ere my sword
Leap from its scabbard to revenge in blood
Thy base, misboding lies!

ALBERT.

Ha! ha! ha!

GONDABERT.

Darest, soddren-witted slave, to mock my wrath?—
Fiends! now I on him look, why do I start
At th' evil glances of that scoffing eye?
His visage drives the blood cold to my heart!
His wild laugh sounded like——It cannot be.
What weakness hath possessed me?—(*aside*). Wolf-dog,
hence!—

Still dost thou brave me with that brow of scorn,
Nor, like a trembling bond-serf, crouch in fear?

ALBERT.

Fear! what is fear? I know it not, proud Thane.

GONDABERT.

Audacious swineherd! speak'st thou like an equal?

ALBERT.

Why *am* I not thine equal, Gondabert?—
Bating thy jewelled robes, thy warman's spear
Of freedom and command, thy insolent train
Of serving-vassals, and thy rich domains
And titled birth,—for which, high-minded lord,
Chance claims thy thanks. I am at least a man,
Although a slave, and not the haughtiest Thane
Wins higher rank in nature; while in honour,
I'll challenge an equality with him
Who stands the mightiest noble of the land,
Scorning the shame of falsehood. Let that teach thee
An injured slave can be an honest man.

[*Holding out the letter.*GONDABERT—(*snatching it.*)

By Mary's blessed shrine, 'tis Edgar's hand !

ALBERT.

How rolls his full eye like a savage stag's
When kept at bay by hounds. Were those bright robes
Of splendour on *my* back, I should appear
A braver lord than he.

GONDABERT.

O, this would turn
Meekness into a Fury, love paternal
To deadly hate and loathing ! Powers of hell,
Have ye conspired to blast a father's hopes?—
Down choking rage, nor to the evil eye
Of this strange slave expose me. A deep spell,
A dark disease of mind, some youthful witch
Hath on thee, Edgar, cast, and marred thy brain!—⁽²²⁾
This letter proves thy story merits faith,
And high reward shall wait on thy desert.

ALBERT.

I ask but in return, my lord, one gift :
It is emancipation from the yoke
Of galling slavery, and that bright reward
Shall make me feel I am indeed a man,—
Shall give me a new being, and to thee
(As my hereafter actions I will shape)
Yield greater honour than a victory won
By thy good sword in battle.

GONDABERT.

From this hour
Thou art no more a slave. On to the castle.

ALBERT.

Freedom is mine ! I've won my glorious birthright !
 Off, hated badge of slavery ! *[Flinging away his*
chain collar. My young neck
 Shall never stoop to wear thy yoke again.
 Glory is dawning on my spirit now,
 And fame shall mark my tomb to other years.
 England, the time will come when all thy sons
 Throughout thy wide dominions shall, like me,
 Dash off their chains, and shout forth "Liberty !" *[Exit.*

GONDABERT.

That is no common slave. What mystery hangs
Dark as yon hill-cloud on him? His stern eye
Glanced like the basilisk's! Imports it not,
Since he must walk no more abroad to blab
This tale of witchcraft and my son's disgrace.
Have I in kindred blood plunged deep this hand,
Stabbed my soul's peace, and from my pillow scared
The soft and balmy sleep, thus to be foiled
In the great work I laboured to complete?
Sleep! O, to me when thy brief visits come,

The shadows of the damned around me flock,
And ghastly forms haunt all my evil dreams!
The forms of those I've wronged—the innocent—
The murdered children——

Enter Messenger, hastily.

Who art thou? A spy
Upon my private thoughts? A listener, sent
To pluck the secrets from my tortured soul,
And then betray them to the scoffer's scorn?

MESSENGER.

I listened not, my lord—

GONDABERT.

Liar and slave! [*Rushing on him.*

I'll tear thy heart out, rend thee limb from limb,
And with thy treacherous carcass gorge the wolves!
Ha! ha! ha!—

Nay, do not tremble, man. A sudden passion
Came o'er my troubled brain. At times a cloud
Of darkness flits across this harassed mind.
My son's disgrace—I mean my brother's wrongs—
I mean—I—know not what I mean.
Heed not my words—thy presence doth confound me.
What brings thee to the forest?

MESSENGER.

Good my lord,

I bear despatches of the utmost moment
From Ethelred the King; and was commanded
To place them in no other hands than thine,
When I arrived at Lydford. [*Delivering a sealed packet.*

GONDABERT.

All Heaven's blessings
Rest on his Highness! He, I trust, is well.

MESSENGER.

He is, my lord.

GONDABERT.

Return to Lydford castle.

A largess waits thee there.

[*Exit Messenger.*]

What state concerns are these? I let me peruse.

[*Opens the packet and reads.*]

“To our trusty and well-beloved Thane, Gondabert Earl of Devon, greeting.—Whereas by the advice of our Æthelings, Earldormen, Thaness, and chief officers of our household, in council assembled, we have resolved and do decree, that on the holy Eve of St. Brice, all the Danes, not excepting one in any station, within our realms, shall for their haughtiness, oppression, and barbarous cruelty to the English, be put to the sword privately, not sparing the women or children of that detested people; that so our kingdom may be rid of its lordling oppressors, and our loving and faithful subjects be restored to their inheritance, and dwell in liberty and peace.

These commands we lay on all men of the Saxon nations, who hold authority and office under us, within these our kingdoms.

ETHELRED THE KING.”

A general massacre! and in cold blood!
Women and children, too! Why even I,
Who have not shrunk from fiendish deeds of guilt,
Do almost freeze with horror. Hence, remorse!
The softer feelings here must find no place.
St. Brice, to-morrow is thy fatal eve:
Murder and death shall chaunt thy vigil hymns.
I'll do this work of vengeance—it may suit
My private purpose: 'tis the King's command,
And on *his* head be all the blood I spill. [Exit.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Grand Hall in Lydford Castle.*

Enter Gondabert and Harold.

HAROLD.

THE Danes throughout the kingdom to be slain?
And in one night?

GONDABERT.

Ay, Harold, every soul,
Man, woman, and the suckling at the breast.

HAROLD.

'Tis horrible!

GONDABERT.

It is the King's command;
And, seneschal, we must obey his will.
Let all my warmen and retainers hold ⁽²³⁾
Themselves in readiness, and they will need
Well-sharpened blades—'twill be a bloody work.
Mark, instant death shall be that soldier's doom
Who dares to breathe a word.—Thou look'st aghast.

HAROLD.

It is a frightful deed!

GONDABERT.

The dainty slaves!
'Tis just to cut them off. Do they not waste
The hours in decking their voluptuous forms
In splendid garments? o'er their flowing locks
Pour the most precious ointments of the East,

And riot on the substance of the English ?
Who dare not lift the mead-cup to their lips,
When in the presence of these lordly thieves,
Without the fear of death. (24)

HAROLD.

Most true, my lord.

But ah, their guiltless infants—

GONDABERT.

Perish all—

The serpents and their spawn ! or the vile brood
Will rise and sting our young ones to the heart—
All but my lovely captive and her slave.
But I have that which claims more anxious thought
Than these fell Danes. Go, hither send my son.

HAROLD.

Has he discovered Edgar's luckless passion ?
Dark thoughts are gathering in his troubled breast,
And mark his clouded brow.

GONDABERT.

Why stand'st thou there ?

Command him to my presence.

HAROLD.

I obey. [Exit.

GONDABERT.

Had but this shameful tale been spread abroad,
My glory had departed, and the line,
The illustrious line of Gondabert been dashed
From honour's radiant page.

Enter Edgar.

Audacious boy !

Strange thou canst wear that brow of guilty boldness,
And meet my searching glance with steadfast eye,

When in thy heart lurks a disgraceful secret,
Which, once made known, would thy fair honour blast,
And sink thy father to a timeless grave.

EDGAR.

Mysterious are thy words of wrath to me.
I wot not of their meaning : but I stand
Fearless in innocence, and proof to all
Th' envenomed shafts of slander.

GONDABERT.

Spare thy words.

Know then at once, to strike thee dumb with shame,
'Thou minion of a slave-begotten slave,
Thy baseness is discovered ! Look on this.

[Showing the letter, then flinging it towards him.]

Read thy confusion there.

EDGAR.

A falsehood shall not taint my lips, for now
The cherished passion of this ardent heart
Right frankly will I own—nay more, my lord,
Boast of it as my joy, my honest pride.
True 'tis, that gentle birth no lustre lends
To the self-radiant charms of her I love,
Whose beauty, form, and mind, divinely matched,
Make her a paragon, transcending all
The lofty damsels of the English court.
Wouldst thou but on this maiden deign to look,
Her smile would that stern heart to kindness win,
And draw a blessing from thee.

GONDABERT.

I look on her ?

The accurst enchantress whose dark passion-spells
Thy reason and thy honour have destroyed ?
Dare not to hope that I will sacrifice

My glory in the flames of thy base love.
My word is pledged : the powerful Duke of Cornwall
Waits to bestow on thee his daughter's hand.
On, then—on to dominion and a throne !

EDGAR.

Ambition, like the winter's reckless storms,
Swells high the mountain torrent of thy pride.
I love not noisy greatness, but through life
Would, like the valley-streamlet, glide in peace,
Amid the music and the flowers of love.

GONDABERT.

Spell-witched enthusiast, wouldst thou love despair,
And wed thyself to beggared infamy ?
Such folly might teach Patience to blaspheme !

EDGAR.

Thou still hast been to me the kindest parent,
And I thy love return with such affection,
That it would almost break my heart to say,
Father, adieu for ever ! Yet banish me
Far from thy presence to some storm-girt isle,
Whose dreary solitudes have never heard
The voice of man, with her my young heart loves,
Rather than chain me to a hated throne,
Or bind this brow with regal gems, whose fires
Would my hot brain, like hell-born lightning, scorch !

GONDABERT.

Answer one question,—speak as if thou stood'st
On the dim threshold of eternity :
Say, is that life which being gave to thine,
Is it held sacred by an only son ?

EDGAR.

Bear witness all ye ministers of Heaven,
Ye warrior hosts of light, who o'er the Danes

Victory to us have given in fields of glory,
And bowed their raven-banners to the Cross, ⁽²⁵⁾
Witness the filial ardour of my soul
For thee, loved, honoured author of my being.

GONDABERT.

Then, on this sword, swear—swear, in solemn dread,
By Heaven and all its joys, by those fierce pangs
Which hell for perjury hath in reserve;
Swear by the blessed passion of the Cross,
Thy hope, thy passport to the realms of bliss;—
And, if thou break thine oath, on thee invoke
The torments of the lost while here on earth,
And, when thou quitt'st that form of loathsome anguish,
Redoubled pangs amid the penal fires
Of everlasting torture!—Edgar, swear.

EDGAR.

Swear! what, my lord? What wouldst thou have me
swear?

GONDABERT.

Elfilia to renounce—renounce for ever!

EDGAR—(*after a pause.*)

No! Rather let me by unheard of pangs
Die inch by inch, yet never reach that goal
Where human sufferings end!

GONDABERT.

Then hear *me* swear—

EDGAR.

Hold! O, for mercy hold!

GONDABERT.

Now by that oath,
With heart of fire, that in its sternest mood
Hath loved thee, Edgar—ay, these burning tears
Too deeply tell the father's strong affections—

By that tremendous oath do I now swear,
The hour thou wedd'st a slave shall see this sword
Plunged in thy father's heart ! and on thy head
His reeking blood shall rest.

EDGAR.

O, horror ! horror !

[Edgar staggers back, and leans against a pillar speechless.—A pause.]

GONDABERT.

Come, Edgar—come, my gallant, noble son,
Take courage to thine aid : like a true hero,
Stir up a manly spirit to quell thyself.
Thy spring-tide virtues have borne richest flowers ;
Let not this spell-wrought passion blast their promise,
And they shall ripen into glorious fruit,
That time will make immortal. Let my prayers
Win back thy soul to honour, and the blessing
Of a fond parent rest upon thy head.

EDGAR.

O, what a struggle duty and affection
Wage in this troubled heart !
Shall I prove faithless to my gentle maid ?
My life, Elfilia, is bound up in thine.

GONDABERT.

And dost thou still prefer that low-born slave
To fame, to honour, and thy father's life ?
Hence from my sight, thou bastard to my blood !
I sicken to behold thee ; once my son,
Now mine no more for ever !

[Exit.]

EDGAR.

No, Elfilia,
They shall not tear thee from these faithful arms !
And yet to steep my bridal bed in blood,

A dear-loved parent's blood ! O dreadful thought !
I'll yield her up, resign the beauteous maid
To happier arms, myself to endless woe !
Resign her to a savage mountaineer ?
Eternal madness would be then my fate !
So closely round her are these heart-strings twined,
That he who plucks her from me, must the chords
Of life asunder rend ! [Exit.

Re-enter Gondabert.

GONDABERT.

What ! is he gone ?
I must be speedy in my dire intent.
There is no way but this. Another victim,
Ambition, must on thy red altar bleed !
How deeply am I plagued for my misdeeds.
My brother, nephews—where, ay, where are they ?
Dust, ashes, slumbering in their gory graves !
And blood must flow again ! Now could I find
That fiend-like instrument, whose dagger won
For me Devonia's Earldom.—He, no doubt,
Has long since perished with his robber clan,
And their white bones hang whistling to the winds
On yonder lonely moor.

*Enter Roderick, his figure and face wild, ghastly,
and ferocious.*

What witchcraft's this ?
I have no spell to call thee from the tomb. ⁽²⁶⁾
Look not upon me with that ghastly smile ;
It makes my marrow freeze ! Away, grim spectre,
Back to thy gallows tree !

RODERICK.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

GONDABERT.

The sound of hell is in thy fiendish mockery,
To him who feels th' undying worm within.
And hell, if thou art mortal, sent thee here
Another dark and bloody scene to act.
That look ferocious speaks thee ready still
To do my bidding. Give me, then, thy hand—
'Tis warm with life. Welcome, thrice welcome,
Roderick.

RODERICK.

I thank thee, Thane. Hearing of thy return,
I hastened hither to renew our friendship,
If, proud in fortune's sun and winged with fame,
Thou soar'st not to a height above my reach.
I have not been without *my* victories, too,
Or many a fair prize on the moor's wild skirts,
Won gallantly in spite of sword and law.

GONDABERT.

Most opportunely com'st thou to my wish.

RODERICK.

Thou somewhat knowest my deeds. Thine elder brother
By my bold daring fell into the hands
Of those death-dealing Danes, who spared him not :
And both his infant sons, consigned by thee
To these kind nursing arms, I rocked asleep ;
Nor have they from their slumbers e'er awoke.

GONDABERT.

Roderick, I've seen them oft.

RODERICK—(*alarmed.*)

Ha ! where, my lord ?

GONDABERT.

In horrid dreams and visions of the night,
That o'er me fling the torments of the damned !

RODERICK.

Pshaw ! 'tis thy fancy, Thane. Oft have I wiped
The blood of men from this keen dagger's blade ;
Yet sleep I soundly when the night-storm howls,
As the strong eagle on her mountain-perch.

GONDABERT.

Long years have passed away since the fierce Danes
Destroyed that brother, whom my soul abhorred.
The grave hath safely cradled, too, those brats.—
But there is yet one act, brave Roderick, which
Thou must perform, and ever bind me fast
To thee in gratitude.

RODERICK.

Name it, my lord.

But let me say that gratitude is oft
A poor rewarder. Like gold-feathered birds,
That sit and warble while we stand aloof,
But, if approached, soar quickly on the wing,
Are most men's promises,—made in their need.
A dangerous service claims a better gift
Than soft lack-money words.

GONDABERT.

What ! would this slave
Claim half my Earldom ?—(*aside.*) Do but this one act,
And I will heap rewards upon thy head
Beyond thine utmost wishes. Dost thou know
A female slave o' th' borders of the moor,
Much noted for her beauty ?

RODERICK.

What, Elfilia ?

I've heard our band commend her comely looks.

GONDABERT.

The same, the very same. She deals in spells,
And the forbidden arts of dark enchantment.
Her witchcraft blasts my brightest hopes of power,
And while she lives, my honour o'er the steep
Of foul disgrace clings to a reed, that bends
With every sigh she breathes !—I wish her dead.

RODERICK.

She dies, my lord. There need no further words.

GONDABERT.

I charge thee be not prodigal of time.
Take her off quickly, and thy great reward
Shall outgo all deservings.

RODERICK.

Fear me not.

The vesper-bell of yon monastic towers
Shall be her summons to another land.

[*Exit.*]

GONDABERT.

She is disposed of, and my worst fears with her.

Enter Evanda.

EVANDA.

No tidings yet, Rogvalla, of thy fleet !
On what far-distant seas have tempests driven
Thy galley eagle-winged ?—I come once more
Freedom to claim of thee, war-honoured Earl.

GONDABERT.

Freedom ? All-beauteous lady, there is none
Beyond these walls for thee. If thou depart
From the protection of these rampant towers,
Death will o'ertake thy steps.

EVANDA.

Death ? Better far
His cold embrace to meet, and lay me down

In sweet forgetfulness, than here to dwell
Hopeless of every joy.—
Think'st thou that I, in whose veins flow the blood
Of Denmark's bravest sea-kings,—I who oft
Undaunted at the elm have stood, when all
The deep its mountains hurled against the heavens,
That thundered back their wrath,—who on the deck
Have fought unfearingly, and seen that deep
Red with the life-stream of the battle-slain,
That I will shrink from death?

GONDABERT.

Bright ocean-queen,
That sounds like spirit, and it charms me more
Than all the softness which the softest maid
Could breathe in my fond ear. Yet think how dreadful
To meet cold-blooded Murder in thy path,
And see his poniard, gleaming to the moon,
Against thy shieldless bosom. Scorn me not.
Already doth the stern Avenger whet
His two-edged sword to go forth and destroy:
One wild, dread shriek o'er all the land will rise,
Piercing the clouds that hang upon the night,
And every threshold shall be steeped in blood!

EVANDA.

Thy words have a dark meaning——

GONDABERT.

They breathe death,
Death on St. Brice's Eve to every Dane!
There's not an Englishman but is prepared
To do the King's command. Wilt thou refuse
To fly to the protection of these arms?
No power but love can stay thy threatened doom.

EVANDA.

Then let me perish—perish gloriously !
Think'st thou I at the altar would accept
Thy hand, all reeking with my nation's blood ?
How I despise and hate thee for the thought !
Visions of what shall come, your spell is on me.
Hark ! hear'st thou not the shouts of fierce revenge ?
From Norway's cape to Denmark's southern isles
The North pours forth her thousands on thy land !
England ! thy King for this shall sit in dust,
And sackcloth be his robes. He comes ! he comes !
The warrior of the North, to wear thy crown,
And tread upon the necks of Saxon slaves !

GONDABERT.

Never, false-boding maid.

EVANDA.

Proud scorner, mark ;
As truly do my words predict what shall be,
As those deep hollow sounds, the sea at eve
Breathes in its dream of peace, foretell the storm
Which dooms the barque to perish. Make thou bare
That sword of vengeance, and its point shall pierce
Deep to thine own heart's core ! [Exit.]

GONDABERT.

I do not heed
The wild dreams of thy darkly-troubled fancy.
The sound of Death's pale steed, as on he rides
In terror through the land, will tame thy spirit.
Within there, ho !

Enter Harold and Othmar.

Are all things now prepared
For Edgar's bridal rites ?

HAROLD.

All, good my lord,—
Except the bridegroom, who will ne'er be ready.

[*Aside.*]

GONDABERT.

Let splendour not be lacking: I would have
All pomp of circumstance attend the spousals
Which royalty demands. The town of Lydford
I will have gay with bonfires, and with lights
And torch-flames lustrous make our garden-bowers,
Where every vassal to the harp and pipe
Shall hold high revelry.—To-morrow eve
How changed will be the scene! Thy duty 'tis
To see the honours of our house sustained.

[*Exit Harold.*]

Othmar, my castellan, chief of my guards,
'Thou know'st the secret of St. Brice's Eve?

OTHMAR.

I do, my lord.

GONDABERT.

There is within these walls
A serf, to whom I lately freedom gave,
Albert by name. Have thou an eye upon him,
And let him not depart: he knows a secret
That troubles me. 'To-morrow, when thou hear'st
St. Brice's heavy death-knell, let him die. ⁽²⁷⁾

OTHMAR.

Your will, illustrious Earl, shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*]

GONDABERT.

Thus wade I on from blood to blood, each step
Still deeper than the last! What abject slaves
Are we to our dark passions. All our pleasures
Are dearly bought with toil; and when achieved,

Fade like the rainbow, which o'er hill and dale
The mountain-boy pursues with fruitless speed.

Well, be it so.—

One sun-bright passion still inspires my soul
Amid its gloomiest storms—love for the land
That gave me birth ; and to protect her rights,
Her lofty freedom, which so well befit
A subject to enjoy, a prince to give,
I at thy shrine, St. Brice, a sacrifice
Will offer of my country's hated foes.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Castle Gardens, illuminated with torches. At the upper part of the stage, tables laid out for a feast, canopied with festoons of flowers.*

A crowd of Vassals of both sexes discovered, with bands of glee-men and glee-maidens dancing in various groupes, and Scalds playing on their harps ; others tossing knives and balls in the air, ⁽²⁸⁾ with all the sports of a Saxon festival.

Enter Elfilia, with a wild distracted air.

ELFILIA—(*advancing to the front of the stage.*)

What do I here, amid this festive scene ?
Where every vassal shouts joy to thy bridal,
Destroyer of my peace ! I, too, will shout
A darkly evil day, and many, follow
Thy nuptials, cruel Edgar. Here the wolf,
The grey wolf of Dunheved's mountain dwells ; ⁽²⁹⁾
Yet have I wildly ventured to his den.
Earth has no greater misery now for me :
I'm reckless what may come——

CHORUS OF VASSALS.

Sound the tabor, harp, and flute,
Virgins touch the soft-toned lute;
Edgar, son of warlike might,
'Tis thy happy bridal night:
Love entwines his magic flower
Round thy rich coronal of power.

ELFILIA.

Cease those strains
Of festal joy, and let the mournful knell
Ring out its dirge of death. Ye roses fade,
Ere on thy brows the priest, thou false one, bind ⁽³⁰⁾
The sacred bridal wreath. Rend those bright garlands,
And bring, ye maids, pale flowers to strew my corse:
Prepare, ye guests, for me the winding-sheet,
And steep it in the crimson tears this heart
Weeps for thy falsehood, Edgar. I once more
On thee will look, and then away, away
To yonder mountains, a wild maniac flee:
There with the wolf I'll make my stormy home,
And dig my own grave out.—The grave, the grave!
There is no other home on earth for me. [Retires.

Enter Edgar, followed by Harold.

EDGAR.

Not see her? no where to be found?

HAROLD.

No, good my lord.

I saw the bond-neif, Editha, in tears
Lamenting that Elfilia, wild with grief,
Had fled, she knew not whither.

EDGAR.

Fled ?

Perish renown but I will through the world
Seek her, nor food nor rest——

*[As he is going off he meets Elfilia, she shrieks and
sinks overpowered into his arms.]*

Transporting bliss !

This happy, happy meeting——

ELFILIA—(*disengaging herself from his embrace.*)

Hence ! forbear !

Thou art another's.—See the torches blaze
On yonder altar ! There thy regal bride
Waits for her gallant Edgar. Let me take
One last, one parting look, then far away
Wander amid the howling wilderness,
And find some cave to die in.—Cruel Edgar !

[Bursts into tears.]

EDGAR.

Still am I thine, and only thine, sweet maid.

ELFILIA.

No more delude me with thy flattering tongue——

EDGAR.

There's not a moment to be lost in words.

My flight with thee shall prove my constant truth :
Our steeds stand ready to convey us hence.

On, Harold, to the grove.

[Exit Harold.]

ELFILIA.

And art thou true indeed ?

EDGAR.

As truth itself. The impatient princess waits,
Clad in her bridal robes : my father calls—
My father ?—O, my heart !—I see him now——

ELFILIA—(*alarmed.*)

Where, where, my dearest lord ?

EDGAR—(*not attending to her.*)

O, yes, I see

My honoured father in his wild despair,
As he beside the trembling princess kneels,
Invoking Heaven's dread curses on my head !
He on the ground flings his uprooted locks
In bitter madness ! Agony of soul
The flashing of his dark eye dims with tears,
As rain and lightnings mingle. Now his hand
The glittering dagger grasps ; he calls on me,
On me his son, but calls in vain, to save him.
Deep in his heart the horrid steel is plunged !
'Tis I who strike the blow !—My brain's on fire !
His blood streams o'er the altar, and from thence
Will it cry out against me for revenge !
Revenge ! revenge on a foul parricide !

[*Edgar falls, Elfilia shrieks and sinks beside him.*

*Enter Roderick and several Robbers, the Peasants
scream with terror and run off. Roderick mo-
tions the Robbers, who seize Elfilia.*

ELFILIA.

Awake, my Edgar ! Fiends, let go your hold ;
Ye shall not tear me from him.—
Save me, my Edgar, save ! He hears me not.
Ah, then farewell, for ever and for ever !

[*Faints in the arms of the Robbers, who bear her
off. Roderick stands in a triumphant attitude
over the fallen Edgar.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Banks of the Tamar, by moonlight.*

A Danish Fleet discovered drawn up to the shore. Rogvalla, Cathimar, Ivor, and Frotho leap from the foremost vessels, followed by the Danish army.

CHORUS OF DANISH SOLDIERS.

OUR home is the booming ocean wide,
Where in sunlight and storm we fearlessly ride,
Where many a rock-girt island lies,
All wealthy and fair,—the warrior's prize.
We laugh when the rushing blast comes by,
When lightnings dart from the lurid sky,
And midnight is there, and the last faint ray
Of the struggling moon hath passed away.
Then afar, afar o'er the storm-swept flood
We joyously rush to plunder and blood !
Now fling on this island's night-winds, fling
Our dark banner-raven's magical wing.
Sound, sound to the charge, lift the fierce battle-cry,
And march, proudly march, to conquer or die !

ROGVALLA.

Once more, fair England, to our warlike tramp
Echoes thy flowery soil. What joy to roam
From land to land, and hear its wail and shriek
Ascend to heaven, the heralds of our might.
Nor tides nor stormy billows stay our course :

The sea-king makes the elements his slaves,
To speed him on to plunder and renown.

CATHIMAR.

Ours is a manly life of freeborn rovers.

ROGVALLA.

I scorn the dull inactive state of those
Who dwell beneath a smoky roof, and quaff
The wine-cup o'er their blazing hearths.—By Odin !
'Tis the life of slaves. Our dwelling is
The summer ocean in its sunny pride,
Or in the boundless hall of winds and storms,
With meteors and the crimson lightning roofed,
Where Thor on his cloud-throne of thunder sits,
And rules the noisy heavens.

CATHIMAR.

Ay, noble chief,
Lord of the land and sea the Northman roams.

ROGVALLA.

The wealth of field and fold my soul disdains.
An honourable harvest do I reap
From cities sacked and villages in flames : ⁽³¹⁾
These are the trophies of the illustrious brave.
The ocean is my golden path to glory ;
And I such ample spoils have nobly won,
As to my wide dominion of the deep
Have gained a host of brave ones.

IVOR.

Who will ne'er
Desert thy banner, while a fragment floats
Above thy barque's tall mast.

ROGVALLA.

I now must leave you.
At my return by morn, I'll call you forth

To battle with the haughty Thane of Devon,
Who holds Evanda captive in his halls.
Let me but free her from this Saxon's power,
And then, ye dauntless lions of the sea,
Shall fire and sword make one wide desolation,
And plunder be your valour's bright reward.
Ho ! Cathimar.

CATHIMAR.

Here, my valiant leader.

ROGVALLA.

Take thou my helm, the motion of whose plumes
The courses of the unruly winds can change,
Or sink them into silence ; and this shield
Of blazing gold, invulnerable to lance,
Arrow, and sword of foe,—for it was forged
By fairy dwarfs amid their secret caves,
Rich with refulgent ore and starry gems, ⁽³²⁾
Then, by the maids of death, cooled in the fount
Which flows beneath Valhalla's throne of light,—
These, in my absence, as vicegerent wear,
And rule till I return.

CATHIMAR.

With joy—and hope
That thou, young warrior, wilt appear no more
To claim them at my hands. [Aside.]

ROGVALLA.

Bring my disguise. I'll seek this western Earl,
And, as a wandering harper, in his halls
With music's sweet enchantment charm the serpent
To swift destruction.

Enter Albert.

Who art thou ? A Saxon ?

ALBERT.

I am.

ROGVALLA.

Why, Christian fool, art thou life-wearied grown?
And is thy lot so dark, that not one gleam
Of hope beams on thee?

ALBERT.

No; though dark it be,
Yet through the storm a straggling beam of glory
Breaks brightly on me.

ROGVALLA.

Soon will it be quenched
In total darkness. We no mercy show
To a vile Saxon, who bows not to earth
And cries, Hail! my lord Dane. ⁽³³⁾

ALBERT.

I will not bow
To earth before the proudest of you here,
Nor lick the blood-stained dust from off your feet.

[*Cathimar and Ivor half unsheathe their swords.*
I laugh your swords to scorn.—Give me a lance,
And I will make the stoutest warman here,
Who dares this iron-sinewed arm to meet
In equal combat, humbly kiss the ground
Beneath *my* feet.

ROGVALLA.

Thou vaunt'st right boldly, slave.

ALBERT.

Slave in thy teeth! I am as free as thou,
A sea-king born, to wander where I list.
As boldly as my tongue hath dared to speak,
This arm, doubt not, shall act.

ROGVALLA.

Thy manly bearing,
Thy form and countenance, all for thee plead,
And wake my heart to friendship. Whence comest thou?

ALBERT.

I from the towers of Gondabert have fled,
That den of murder; and amid these woods,
Wandering I knew not whither, heard rich music
Break on the breathless night. I shouted loud
“Danes and revenge are come!” and the dim woods
And rocks replied, “Danes and revenge are come!”

ROGVALLA.

Is there a Saxon heart that can feel joy
At our arrival?

ALBERT.

Yes, *I* feel a joy,
A maddening joy of fierce and just revenge
On that stern, villain Thane, the Earl of Devon.
Listening in secret, I o’erheard a plot,—
A plot to murder all the Danes that breathe
Within the English realms! Yet a brief space,
Be well assured, and this remorseless act
Shall be performed; while I, for service done
To that false Earl, was also doomed to fall.

ROGVALLA.

O, for such treachery shall these Saxon dogs
Be worthily repaid!—
Come, guide me to the Earl of Devon’s strong towers,
And thou shalt to my heart be as a brother.

ALBERT.

I’ll do it gladly.

ROGVALLA.

Arm him with a war-knife,

And o'er his shoulders fling the minstrel's vest.
Prepare our tents, and keep good watch and ward.

IVOR.

And wilt thou trust thee with this stalwart Saxon?

ROGVALLA.

Trust him? Ay, would I, by my golden bracelets, ⁽³⁴⁾
Though he possessed the strength of twenty Saxons.
There is an open, fearless honesty
Imprinted on his brow; and in that eye
No base dissimulation darkly clouds
The flashing of its spirit-lighted fire.

ALBERT.

Thou read'st me, warrior, rightly. I would joy
The fiercest that e'er wielded blade to meet
In a death-wrestle for the prize of fame;
But let him my protection claim, and I
In his defence this heart's life-blood would spill.

ROGVALLA.

If I return in safety, thou shalt have
Plunder and high command.

ALBERT.

Deeply, young chief,
Have I been wronged by Saxon lords and tyrants,
And from my birth in galling bondage held;
Yet let this sword-arm from my trunk be lopped,
Ere I will lift it to destroy my country.
Give me a battle-axe, and lead me on
To other lands and other isles than England,
And I as brave a name in arms will win
As ever echoed round your northern shores.

ROGVALLA.

Take these my golden bracelets. Thou shalt be
My brother until death. At our return,

We'll quaff the wine-cup mingled with our blood, ⁽³⁵⁾
And swear eternal friendship. Hark! I hear
The distant signals of a coming storm.
Thou wilt not heed the huffing of the blast?

ALBERT.

I heed it? Why on yon bleak, barren moor
I've met the tempest in its fiercest wrath,
[*Thunder remote.*

When awful spirits and unholy forms,
That walk at night the desert, from their wings
Shook the pale lightning round me; while the thunder
Made tor and mountain quake, till sunk its voice
In the far-sounding cataract's solemn roar,
Whose grandeur fills the wild: yet have I laughed ⁽³⁶⁾
These mountain flaws to scorn, breasting their rage
Unflinchingly.

ROGVALLA.

Come, then, and let us on.

ALBERT.

Now shall I, Gondabert, have full revenge
For thy contempt and black ingratitude,
That deemed my life more worthless than thy dog's.
A sword ere long *my* arm will grace, and I
Shall onward rush to glory o'er thy neck. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—*A Forest. The stage quite dark. A
Tempest, with thunder and lightning.*

Enter two Robbers, dragging in Elfilia in a swoon.

FIRST ROBBER.

I'll carry her no further.

SECOND ROBBER.

I do not half like this bloody business—and such a

bitter tempest, too. Every thunder-clap seems to din in our ears, 'Tis a most unmanly act.

FIRST ROBBER.

Pshaw ! never let honour be upon thy lips again, when disobedience to orders sticks at thy fingers' ends. Our commands were to kill her in this forest, and bury her immediately.

SECOND ROBBER.

Well, then, to business, since it must be so.

[Drawing his poniard.]

FIRST ROBBER.

Stay ; we'll fasten her to this tree, and by the glimpses of the lightning make her a fair mark for our arrows I'll wager half my share of the next night's booty, that I hit her in the heart with the first shaft.

ELFILIA—*(reviving.)*

O, mercy, mercy ! Spare, O, spare my life !

FIRST ROBBER.

Thy prayers are vain. Our captain commanded us to dispatch thee in this forest, and we never dispute his orders. Reward is all we have to look to.

ELFILIA.

O think on that reward, which from the throne
Of Heaven's Almighty justice is dispensed
To the relentless murderer ! Hear ye not
His voice, who made the world and all its creatures ?
Mark, how in dreadful thunder it forbids
This most inhuman deed ; while every flash
That your terrific forms to me reveals,
Is but the pale reflection of that vengeance,
Which at the hour of death shall be outpoured
In crimson cataracts on the soul of him,
Who dares to plunge his hand in guiltless blood !

FIRST ROBBER.

Comrade, listen not to her, but help me to bind her fast ; or our captain shall know of thy cowardly milk-heartedness.

ELFILIA.

O, yet a moment stay—give me but time
To breathe one last, short prayer. Mercy, kind Heaven !

[*The Robbers fasten her to a tree in the centre of the stage, she appears nearly fainting : they then retreat on either side, and make ready their bows and arrows. The first Robber is about to draw his bow, Elfilia shrieks, and Albert and Rogvalla enter at the moment from the top of the stage. A vivid blaze of lightning illuminates the whole scene, and discovers the situation of the characters.*

ALBERT.

Elfilia here ! Fury and vengeance ! Die,
Thou hell-dog murderer, die !

[*Albert rushes forward, and stabs the first Robber ; rapid lightning. The second Robber shoots an arrow at Albert, but missing his aim, is immediately stabbed by Rogvalla. Roderick enters at the same moment, and seeing the Robbers slain, sounds his horn : several of the Banditti rush in, who, with Roderick, seize on Rogvalla and Albert, and after a hard struggle, overcome and disarm them of their war-knives. Elfilia, during the contest, disengages herself from the tree, and makes her escape. Rogvalla's disguise is torn off, and he appears in his Danish habit.*

RODERICK.

Ha, Danes and chiefs ! Revenge again is mine.

O, how it joys my soul when I can see
My sword gilt ruddily with Danish blood.
By hell, that death-doomed maiden is escaped !
Pursue the fugitive, ye lagging slaves,
And bring to me some witness of her fate.

[Exeunt several Robbers.]

ALBERT.

Scald-headed thief, that look'st as if thy carcass
Had on the gibbet-tree to shower and sun
Hung in the north-wind parching, wilt thou, canst thou
Murder that maid so innocently fair ?
Whose beauty all the goodness of her mind
Reflects as clearly as the stream its banks,
Making its waves all flowers ? Off, dog-whelps, off !
My arm shall rescue her from a thousand robbers.

RODERICK.

Thou rescue her, Dane ! What is that maid to thee ?
Ha, why it is the hunter of the moor !
My spies have always had an eye upon thee.
Thou, sturdy knave, shalt do me noble service.
The time is near at hand, when I will make thee
A better captive than a host of Danes.

ALBERT.

Could I shake off these hounds, thou shouldst not go
Unbrained from hence, cadaverous wolf-eyed villain !
Freedom but yesterday to me was given,
And though my soul abhors a bondman's chains,
Let me but, like the lightning, fly to save
Elfilia from thy blood-dogs, and I swear,
By all in earth and heaven, I'll sell this body
To be from henceforth thine eternal slave,
Thy meanest slave, to kneel and wipe the dust

From off thy feet,—do any service for thee,
And lose the name of man.

RODERICK.

I've other work
For thee to do. Hence with them to our cave.

ALBERT.

A curse—ay, and a thousand on thee fall !
I'll plant a dagger in thy throat for this. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Another part of the Forest. Storm continues.*

Enter Elfilia.

ELFILIA.

Have pity on me, all ye saints of light,
In this appalling hour. Assuage your wrath,
Ye storms, that beat on my devoted head,
And pass in pity on. Yet what are all
The terrors of the angry elements
Compared with those of cruel men, who seek
To shed my guiltless blood ? Did ever heart
Feel anguish like to mine ? Where can I flee
For hope or refuge ? Heaven, enwrapped in fire,
Threatens above ; and through the storm I hear
The dismal howlings of the hungry wolf,
And wild halloo of ruffians armed to slay me !
O, Edgar, dearest Edgar, didst thou know
What now is my sad doom !—All gracious heavens !
I hear the murderer's footstep rushing on.
Where can I hide me from his blood-hound search ?

[*As Elfilia attempts to go off, enter one of the Robbers ; she flies to the opposite side and meets another, both having their daggers drawn.*]

Ha ! then all is lost ! Sweet Virgin, take
My guiltless spirit to thy mercy. Oh !—

[Elfilia sinks on the ground overpowered. As the two Robbers seize her to plunge their weapons in her bosom, enter Edgar, with his sword drawn; he rushes on the Robbers, who drop their daggers and unsheathe their swords to fight with him.—Edgar encounters both.—Elfilia revives, and seeing Edgar nearly overcome, snatches up one of the daggers, and stabs the Robber nearest to her; he staggers and falls off, while the other is slain by Edgar. Elfilia and Edgar rush into each other's arms, the former overpowered by her feelings.]

EDGAR.

Revive, loved maid ; all danger now is past.
The Virgin Mother, as I through these woods
Wandered in search of thee, did guide my steps
And aid me in thy rescue. Come, be calm,
And we, ere morn, will quit Devonian's land.

ELFILIA.

The words of hope and joy on my pale lips
Expire ere I can breathe them ; but to Heaven
My heart in humble gratitude outpours
Its silent adoration.

EDGAR.

Let us haste

To where good Harold with our steeds yet waits
To bear us swiftly hence.

[Enter Cathimar and a party of marauding Danes, who surround Edgar as he attempts to fight, and instantly disarm him.]

CATHIMAR.

Ha, Saxons! Ay, and beauty, too!—
 That is *my* prize. Part them, they meet no more.
 Thou art of noble birth—(*to Edgar*). To-morrow is
 Great Odin's festival, and thou shalt be
 A sacrifice meet for our battle-god;
 An offering of revenge to the brave spirit
 Of every Dane that falls by Saxon guile.

ELFILIA.

O, Edgar, Edgar!

EDGAR.

Farewell, dear Elfilia,
 Till we shall meet in heaven.
 [*Exeunt Edgar and Elfilia, hurried off separately.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Hall in the Castle of Lydford, with a lofty window, reaching nearly to the ground, and partly open.*

Enter Gondabert.

GONDABERT.

Vile shame be on thee, Edgar! I'm disgraced
 For ever with the haughty Duke of Cornwall.
 But thou, though fled, that bondmaid ne'er on earth
 Again shalt meet.—
 The storms are past, and from the parted clouds,
 Wooed by the nightingale, comes forth the moon,
 Shedding her soft light o'er the quiet world.
 Hide thee, sweet star: how ill thy presence suits
 The dark scene swift approaching.—Hark! I hear
 The sharpening of the instruments of slaughter:
 It makes *my* blood flow cold! [*Looks out of the window.*
 Lydford, thy streets

Are silent as the grave. What a dread moment,
Big with the fearful fate of unborn years,
England, is this ! There is not one of all
Thy warrior sons but, like the crouching lion
Ere on his prey he springs with savage roar,
Eagerly listens, burning for revenge,
To hear the fatal knell.

[*The vesper-bell of St. Brice rings.*

It sounds ! it sounds
Through the deep stillness !—Onward, onward peals
The voice of death, and mountain unto mountain
Through Ethelred's dominions echoes—Death !
[*A noise, with cries and shrieks, without.*

Enter Roderick.

RODERICK.

Ay, this would be a scene befitting well
My arm and temper, were I but at leisure.

GONDABERT.

Roderick ! What brings thee hither ? Hear'st thou not
The rushing forth of armed multitudes,
Like wintry torrents o'er the storm-beat moor ?—
The struggle and the groan of dying men,
With shrieks of murdered infants and their mothers ?

RODERICK.

I've weightier matters on my hands than listening
To children's screams, or wail of fearful women.

GONDABERT.

Sleeps in her gory tomb that maid of shame ?

RODERICK.

Her heart is colder than the clods that rest
Dark on her forest grave. But I have news

Now to impart, which more concerns thy fame
Than that poor bondmaid's death. Well dost thou,
Thane,

Remember those two boys, thy nephews, whom——

GONDABERT.

A mischief on thee, babbling fool ! Why name,
At such a dreadful hour, those injured ones ?
My soul is clogged with guilt.

RODERICK.

More saintly qualms !

Nay, bid them all subside and hush thy fears,
Thou conscience-stricken penitent, for I
A remedy have brought for thy disease.

GONDABERT—(*bitterly smiling.*)

A remedy ? Canst thou administer
A potion which shall charm to sleep the viper
That here eternal coils its fiery folds,
And feeds upon my life-stream ? If thou canst,
I'll kneel and bless thee.

RODERICK.

Tender-hearted man !

That with repentant tears dost still wash off
The crimson stains of murder, and still dipp'st
Thy hand afresh in blood. I, by St. Peter,
Have brought a remedy, a sovereign balm,
To give thee peace, and sleep, and happy dreams.—
Both thy young nephews live !

GONDABERT.

Both live ! said'st thou ?

No, no !—My brain's bewildered, set on fire !
Madness and torture ! Live ! do they both live ?—
Thou hell-born traitor ! O, thou liest to plague me !

RODERICK.

By Heaven ! 'tis true. Have I not brought thee balm
To heal the sorrows of thy broken heart ?
And call'st thou me a traitor ? Why I thought
Thou wouldst have pressed me in thine arms with joy
To know they live ; and, hastening to restore
Thine ill-got wealth to those whom thou hast robbed,
Exchange the gaudy trappings of thy power
For cowl of beadsman and the hermit's weeds,
Resolved in some lone cell thy days to pass
With peace and penitence.

GONDABERT.

Drive me not mad
With thy foul mockery. Tell me, where hast thou
So long these boys concealed ? and why at such
A time as this, when my distracted soul
Is harassed with a thousand cares and fears,
Are they brought forth to blast me ?

RODERICK.

Mark, then, my words.
One of those boys I to a peasant's care
Confided ; and the other with our band
Was cherished as mine own, till the wild Danes
Once, in my absence, plundered all our treasures,
And bore that boy to sea.—
One led, the other joined the Danes new-landed,
And both are captives in my cavern home.
Hope not that I delude thee.

GONDABERT.

Now thou pour'st
A balm indeed on my fresh-bleeding wounds.
They're mine again ! O transport ! Bring them hither.
They shall not live to see returning light.

RODERICK.

Hold ! not so fast, my lord. I will be now
Rewarded—amply paid for all I've done.
Be generous, then. Remember, mighty Thane,
I hold these struggling sleuth-hounds in the leash ;
If I but let them slip, they'll hunt thee down
To racks and infamy. Where will be then
The boasted glory of thy far-spread fame ?

GONDABERT.

Death and all horrid things are in the thought !

RODERICK.

Then sign this parchment with thy mark and seal, ⁽³⁷⁾
(I've had it long for this event prepared,)
To me devolving half thy vast estates.
Do it, and I these dangerous boys will lodge
Safely within thy towers.

[Gondabert *stands for some moments dumb with
rage and astonishment.*]

GONDABERT.

Give thee half my estates ?

RODERICK.

Or lose the whole. I'm weary of this life
Of blood and plunder, and would fain reform,
And pass my latter days an honest man.

GONDABERT.

An honest man ?

RODERICK.

Yes, plundering, murderous miser !
An honest man I should be, did I wrest,
Ay, every foot of thy possessions from thee.
I am of British blood, and all thou claim'st
Did my forefathers through a glorious line
Justly inherit : thine, a Saxon race

Of worse than Danish pirates, seized the whole,
My ancestors out-turning on the world
To be their wretched slaves. I scorned their fate,
And feel 'tis honest—noble to destroy
All of thy lineage who my rights usurp. ⁽³⁸⁾

GONDABERT.

Thou lying robber ! base, audacious slave !
This instant die !

[*Rushes on Roderick and attempts to stab him, he avoids the blow and wrests the dagger from Gondabert.*

RODERICK.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

Thy feeble fury beggars my derision.
Think'st thou I did not come prepared to meet
Thy utmost vengeance ? If I in one hour
Return not safe, these boys will be set free,—
Such were my strict commands,—free as the winds.
They know from me the secret of their birth,
And to the English monarch will appeal.
There is thy blade. [*Flinging it towards him.*

Now, if thou darest to strike,
Strike manfully. I will not stir a foot,
Till thou hast signed and sealed that deed of gift.

GONDABERT—(*snatching the parchment—a pause.*)
I will not sign it. Let them to the king.
Who will believe a wandering robber Dane,
A nameless pirate ? No, I fear them not.
Take, thou pernicious caitiff, back thy scroll,
[*Flinging it at him.*
I scorn thy deep-laid plans. What ho !

RODERICK.

Hold, Gondabert, if thou wouldst save thyself.
I heed the utmost thou to me canst do

Less than that forest king, the stately elk,
Regards the baying of the mongrel cur.
When I the eldest boy bore to my hold,
I marked his shoulders with a burning arrow, ⁽³⁹⁾
I and my comrade Wolfe. That stamp he bears,
Th' imperishable legend of his birth ;
And when I stripped this sea-king, on his flesh
To carve the Danish eagle,—a keen torment
That joys me to retaliate on those dogs,— ⁽⁴⁰⁾
I knew him for thy brother's long-lost heir.
Wolfe still exists, a witness that shall crush
Thy power to nothing ; for he will proclaim
Before the king, the world, thy nephews' wrongs.

[Gondabert, *overcome by his feelings, staggers and leans for support against the side scenes.*

Decide ! dispatch !—

Dost thou not hear, loud thundering at thy gate,
The lion-like destroyer of the North ?

GONDABERT—(*faintly.*)

Give me the parchment. But what pledge have I
For the fulfilment of thy doubtful word ?

RODERICK.

The safest, surest pledge—that pledge which makes
Honest the miser and the veriest rogue—
My interest.

GONDABERT—(*after signing.*)

There,—begone—nay, fly !

O, tarry not a moment by the way,
Or I am lost for ever.

RODERICK.

Do not fear.

The roaring lion will not 'scape the toils
Ere my return. Wealth, triumph, and revenge ! [*Exit.*

GONDABERT.

Eternal maledictions be thy portion,
And all plagues fasten on thee ! What a night
Of damning crimes is this ! No room is here
For gentle love ; but I the proud Evanda
Have saved from the fierce slaughter.—Well, these boys
In my death-clutches soon will be secured,
And then some means shall take this robber off.
To hired ruffians I will trust no more :
These nephews shall die openly as Danes,
Whose lives my country and my king demand——
Grim spectre, hence ! back to thine ocean depths !
Thou com'st to stay my vengeance ; but in vain,
Thou hated phantom-brother.—I *will* strike,
And save my fame and honour. His dark frowns
Wither my soul !—The fearful spectre rushes,
In lightning clad, upon me !—⁽⁴¹⁾
I'll wrestle with thee, though of other worlds,
While life remains.——

[In his delirium he struggles as with a real combatant.]

Ha ! I am nerveless with his giant grasp ;
His arms of fire crumble my bones to dust !
Help ! help ! I sink amid encircling flames ! *[Falls.]*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Castle.**Enter Evanda and Bertha.*

EVANDA.

'Tis past, the dreadful tragedy is closed,
And, England, thou art one dark land of death !
The wild lament of mothers o'er their babes
Slain on their bosoms, and the roaring flames
Of Danish dwellings, with the wolf-like howl
And shout of Saxons o'er their manly victims,
Have into silence died ! The blood-red streets
Are strewed with corpses, and the listless moon
Sheds her cold light upon the martyred dead.

BERTHA.

Terror o'erpowers my senses, and I feel
Like one just waking from a horrid dream.

[*Flourish and shouts of "The Dane ! the Dane !"*]

EVANDA.

He comes ! he comes ! my loved Rogvalla comes
To save and to revenge. Those martial strains
To me are like the wild notes of the swan,
That sings of coming summer to those isles
Amid the polar ocean. ⁽⁴²⁾

[*Enter, on one side, Gondabert, Othmar, and Saxon Soldiers ; on the other, Roderick and several Robbers, with Rogvalla in chains The Robbers fall back and go off. Evanda rushes into the arms of Rogvalla.*]

O, to meet
My gallant warrior, after long divorce,
Not as a conqueror, but a chain-bound slave !
Yet it is joy e'en thus to meet, for now
We'll die, Rogvalla, in each other's arms.

GONDABERT—(*aside to Roderick.*)

Is he the Danish chief ?

RODERICK.

Yes.

GONDABERT.

How like his sire !
That eagle eye unmans me, and my spirit
Before him quails. Where is the younger brother ?

RODERICK.

Fled.

GONDABERT.

Fled, traitor ? I again am lost !

RODERICK.

Soft awhile.

My interest is at equal stake with thine
In his escape. The strong-limbed villain brained
Two of my stoutest fellows with his chains,
And in the darkness fled to join the Danes
New landed. But the country's up in arms ;
Soon, as a traitor, he'll be hunted down.

GONDABERT.

My heart feels light once more.

RODERICK.

Behold, my lord,
Your Danish prisoner.

ROGVALLA.

Why, thou tenfold miscreant,

Is this the expected freedom ? These vile chains
The birthright thou bestowest ?

RODERICK.

Ay : is it not
Sufficient for thy merit ? Higher honours
Soon will be thine, when o'er the castle walls
That lofty head hangs black'ning in the winds,
And ravens hail with joy thine elevation.

ROGVALLA.

Detested robbersman ! But I will not
By deep concerted treachery thus be wronged.
Saxons and soldiers ! you in me behold
The heir to these proud towers and their domains.
Know, for a truth, I am the long-lost son,
Earl Edric's first-born, whom yon recreant thieves
Conspire to rob of his inheritance.

RODERICK.

Hear ye this madman ? Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !
Captivity hath stirred his shallow wits
To mutiny. What ! carrion bird, wouldst thou
Usurp the tempest-daring eagle's nest ?
The son of Edric !—Ha ! ha ! ha !

[The Saxon Soldiers join in his laugh.]

GONDABERT.

Thou, a wild wandering Dane, a pagan robber,
My long-departed nephew counterfeit ?
Impostor ! fool ! where are thy proofs ? Away !
Such madness moves my mirth. We know thee well,
Thou hideous plague-fiend, who from shore to shore
Roam'st with thy savage crew, nor do ye spare
Or rank, or age, or sex ; your ruthless swords,
Mid shouts of impious revelry, commix

The blood of serfs and nobles, priests and kings.
But your detested locust-hordes this night
Are in one purple torrent swept from off
The groaning land—the wide-spread plague is stayed.
My country's wrongs demand that thou shouldst die,
And on my gates thy severed head I'll spike,
England's last noble trophy of revenge !

ROGVALLA.

Hide not thy hell-deeds 'neath the splendid veil
Of patriot virtue. Murderer ! Fratricide !
Where is thy brother, my renowned sire ?
His blood for vengeance calls on thee and thine !

GONDABERT.

Stop the foul reptile's tongue ! Prepare the block.
Hence with him to the castle's deepest dungeon !

EVANDA.

Hold ! coward tyrant ! Stay, Rogvalla, stay ;
I'll with thee die,—no power again shall part us !

GONDABERT.

Bear hence the lady to her chamber. Quick !
Tear them asunder.

EVANDA.

Off, vile murderers, off !
Thus, thus I'll twine his chains around my limbs,
And to him cling while sense or being last.

[*The Soldiers drag off Rogvalla, Evanda wildly
holding him in her arms.*]

GONDABERT.

Harm not Evanda for your lives, ye slaves.—
It stings me they have met. Now for my plan
Of vengeance on this insolent brigand.
Othmar, remember : let not one escape
Of all yon robber crew the sword of justice. [*Aside.*
[*Exit Othmar.*]

Roderick,—give me thy hand.—
Right faithfully hast thou performed thy word.
Thou art an honourable man—thy virtues—

RODERICK.

Oh, my lord.—What further service needs the hypocrite?
[*Aside.*]

GONDABERT.

My gratitude—my favours, worthy Roderick,
[*Leaning on his shoulder.*]

Shall speak—ay, deep—

Deep to thy heart-core let my dagger speak them !

[*Stabs Roderick, who falls dead at his feet ; then eagerly searches his bosom and finds the parchment.*]

'Tis here ! 'tis here ! and I am lord once more
Of Lydford Castle and its wide domains !

Enter Othmar.

OTHMAR.

The sturdy robbers to a man are fallen.

GONDABERT.

My triumph is complete. No, there is one
As yet beyond my reach. Pshaw ! what care I ?
No friend has he to back his cause, or proof
To make me fear him. Has any news
Yet of my son arrived ?

OTHMAR.

No, good my lord.

GONDABERT.

Thou wayward boy ! now leisure serves to think,
Thy disobedient absence sorely pains me.
Send out fresh scouts, and search the country round ;
I have no peace until my Edgar's found.

All other cares are past, and in this breast
Love shall again find its sweet place of rest.
So when dark winter's wreckful storms retire,
And spring-suns light the heavens with golden fire,
Returns the eve-bird to her home of flowers,
And, rich in music, charms the moonlit bowers. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Plain, by moonlight. The Danish
Camp in the back ground.*

Enter Cathimar.

CATHIMAR.

A Saxon renegade the news hath brought,
That our young chief, Rogvalla, is a prisoner
To Gondabert. I now shall have my wish.
His death is certain, and I rise to power,
The leader of yon bands.

Enter Elfilia.

Who gave thee freedom?
And whither goest thou at this early watch?

ELFILIA.

O, stay me not one moment; I would fly
Swift as the winds, to save a captive's life.

CATHIMAR.

What captive's life, fair damsel, wouldst thou save?

ELFILIA.

My Edgar's. Gondabert a prisoner holds
Rogvalla in his towers; and I have won
The chieftains in yon camp to let me fly
To Lydford Castle, and implore the Earl
To exchange the Danish sea-king for his son,
Whom your stern priests demand in sacrifice.

CATHIMAR.

Have they done this without consulting me?
Perish Rogvalla! Let him inch by inch
Waste, famine-clung, a living skeleton,
Till he dash out his anguish-maddened brains
Against his dungeon walls. Thou shalt not hence.
[Seizing her arm.]

ELFILIA.

Let go thy savage grasp; each moment's precious
To my loved Edgar's life, and while thou hold'st me
He dies! Off monster! off! and let me pass.
A feeble woman's weakness I cast from me,
As on her cloud-girt throne the eagle shakes
From her sun-gilded plume the early dew.
Love nerves me with a manliness of strength,
And were thy strong-knit sinews like the elk's,
I'd strive with thee to save my Edgar's life.

CATHIMAR.

Mistaken maid; the dove dares not to wage
Unequal combat with the towering falcon.
Nay, struggle not; for softer strife than this
Thy delicate and gentle limbs were formed.
Come to my tent.

ELFILIA.

Never, till thou shalt bear
My bleeding corse in thy detested arms.
Oh, for a mighty giant's strength to battle
With this foul-visaged robber!—"Tis in vain.—
Alas, I feel I am but woman still.
O, look with pity on me, dreadful chief! *[Kneeling.]*
Let not a poor heart-broken maiden sink
Prostrate before thee, and in vain beseech
A man, a gallant warrior to show mercy.

Come, come, thou wilt relent ; and let me now,
Kind, gentle Dane, depart.

CATHIMAR.

Thou suest in vain.

ELFILIA.

Then will I raise the camp with my loud shrieks,
And call the chiefs to aid me with their swords.

CATHIMAR.

Nor cries or tears will aught avail thee here ;
For, in the absence of Rogvalla, I
Am the commander of yon dauntless bands,
And henceforth under me they march to battle.
Come, then : my tent is filled with splendid robes
And precious gems, the spoil of many lands.

ELFILIA.

Out, fiend of darkness ! Help ! O righteous Heaven !

Enter Albert.

ALBERT—(*as he enters.*)

Roam where I may, thy last despairing cries,
Elfilia, on the night-winds sound, and set
My frenzied soul on fire. Her vision comes
Again before me !—Ha ! she lives, she lives !
And we shall part no more !

[*Rushing between Elfilia and Cathimar, and
throwing him off.*]

CATHIMAR.

What dog art thou ?

ALBERT.

One whose strong fangs shall fasten on thy flesh
And shake thee into fragments, if again
Thou place a finger on that lovely maid.

CATHIMAR.

Wouldst thou stir up the princely lion's rage
With thy whelp-bayings? Hence! ere I put forth
My foot and trample thee, earth-crawling vermin.

ALBERT.

Thou shag-eared wolf's-cub of the north—thou Dane!
I'll make thee howl for mercy. This good sword,
Now girt upon my thigh, shall prove my manhood.
[*They fight, and exeunt.*]

ELFILIA.

Angel of victory! guide brave Albert's brand
Home to the ruffian's heart. Alas! he falls.
Now, now he rises with redoubled strength;
His sword hath cleft the Danesman's crashing helm.
Oh, what a sight!—I cannot look again.
Yet, now I do bethink me, Albert may
Retard my eager feet. I dare not tarry
To thank him for deliverance. [*Going.*]

Enter Albert, wounded, with Cathimar's sword bloody.

ALBERT.

Stay, Elfilia,
Let me the pirate's sword lay at thy feet
Red with my blood—the first, and ah! the last
Proud trophy of my arm.

ELFILIA.

Dear Albert, thou
Art wounded e'en to death.

ALBERT.

And am I dear
To thee, Elfilia? Oh, that one kind word
Soothes my departing spirit. Sweet Elfilia,
Forgive, forgive the past, and let my blood

Atone the wrongs I've done. O, could I live
To tell thee of my noble birth, how I,
Wouldst thou be mine——But no, I am cut off,
Ay, in my dawn of glory ; I must sink
To an untrophied grave,—no voice shall speak
Of me hereafter.

ELFILIA.

Albert, I will ne'er
Forget thy noble goodness ; and my hand,
Should I survive the terrors of this night,
Shall strew thy grave with flowers.

ALBERT.

Ah, let me press
On that kind hand one last, one dying kiss ;
And in thy happy hours, oh ! sometimes think
On him who loved thee more——Farewell, Elfilia. [*Dies.*]

ELFILIA.

Alas ! he died for me. Can I refuse
These tears of tender pity ?

[*Music in the camp, Elfilia starts.*]

Ha !—(*shrieks*)—that horn
Proclaims the approaching sacrifice to Odin.
Oh, Edgar, thou wilt be led forth and slain,
Ere I can save thee from their gory knives. [*Rushes off.*]

SCENE III.—*The Hall in Lydford Castle.*

Enter Gondabert.

GONDABERT.

I thought my heart had reached the haven of peace.—
There is no peace to the foul murderer's conscience.
Will nothing calm the stormy passions here ?

I wear a brow of pride ; yet to their will
Am the most abject slave. Remorse is vain,
For I must deeper plunge my soul in blood,
Or shame will pluck my robe of honour off,
And I in naked infamy shall stand
The scorn of Heaven and mockery of mankind !
O, Edgar, Edgar ! where art thou, my son ?
A thousand fears for thee now rack my heart.

*Enter Elfilia, her garments torn, her hair dishevelled,
and her manner altogether wild.—Gondabert starts.*

What fearful vision from the shades below
Art thou, that hell and night have conjured up
To fling new horrors round me ? Speak ! Who art thou ?

ELFILIA.

Elfilia.

GONDABERT.

Open earth, and hide me deep,
Deep in thy centre, from the awful sight
Of that appalling spectre.

ELFILIA.

Nay, my lord,
I am no spectre, but a wretched maid,
Who, braving every danger, dares to rush
Before thee, and on bended knees entreat
Compassion for thy son, thy noble Edgar.

GONDABERT.

Does she then live ? Oh, how have I been fooled !

ELFILIA.

Thine Edgar is a captive to the Danes,
And doomed to die on Odin's gore-stained altar !

[Gondabert hides his face in agony with
both hands.]

Even now, in yonder camp, the inhuman priests
Their horrid rites of sacrifice prepare ;
Wild Dartmoor's mountains echo to their yells
And fearful shouts of revelry around
The blood-feast of their god. Thine Edgar's brows
Are bound with garlands, and the battle-song
To Odin rises from their noisy tents,
Claiming the destined victim.

GONDABERT.

Lost, lost Edgar !

ELFILIA.

Fearless of savage beasts and murderous bands,
I hither o'er the dark moor wildly flew
Through briar and thorny brake, stained with my blood,
To cast me at thy feet. For now the knife
Is sharpening for its gory work of death ;
Yet such the faith they for their sea-king hold,
If thou to him give freedom, Edgar lives.
Haste, then, from his dark dungeon and his chains
Thy captive to release.

GONDABERT.

No, never ! never !

ELFILIA.

Art thou a parent, yet canst see the priest
Plunge his red knife in thine own offspring's heart ?
Canst view him on the horrid altar laid,
Bleeding to death amid encircling flames ?
Hear his expiring groans, his cries for mercy—
To thee for mercy ?—thee, thou ruthless sire,
Who hadst the power, yet wouldst not save thy son ?

GONDABERT.

Can hell find greater torments for ambition
Than those I now endure ? I cannot yield,
To lay me in a grave of infamy.

No, better thou shouldst die, my Edgar, far
Than be the heir to beggary and disgrace. [Aside.]

ELFILIA.

Canst thou, stern Earl, prefer a mean revenge
Even to the life of him thou call'st thy son?
Oh, think what bliss thy soul will feel, when he,
Rescued from death, and by a father rescued,
Shall rush into thine arms! what ecstasies
Thou wilt bestow on two young hearts that love,
Like ours, with boundless passion.

GONDABERT.

Think not I'll save
A son to give him to a bond-maid's arms.
Hence! seek again these Danes, and let their priests
Mingle thy blood with Edgar's on the altar,
Rather than he a base-born slave shall wed.

ELFILIA.

Inhuman man! Proud kings have wreathed, ere now,
Their crowns with low-born beauty's simple flowers. ⁽⁴³⁾
But all must be revealed.—
Nor abject slave, nor vassal-maid am I.
Blood full as noble in my veins doth flow,
As thou, Devonian's haughty chief, canst vaunt;
For I the daughter am of Gloucester's Earl,
Who from a cruel parent's castle fled
To shun the love of Cornwall's potent Duke;
And this disguise hath proved my Edgar's truth.

GONDABERT.

Can this wild tale be true?—

ELFILIA.

Doubt'st thou my story? In this bosom plunge
Thine angry sword, and I will bless the hand
That gives me death, so thou wilt haste to set
Thy Danish captive free.

GONDABERT.

Oh, torture

Unutterable ! There is—there is a cause,
A dreadful, nameless cause ! I dare not give
That captive freedom.

ELFILIA.

Nay, thou must, thou shalt.

My tears will melt thy stubborn heart to pity.
The hour is nearly past.—O, yet preserve him.
He is, Earl Gondabert, thine only son,—
Thy gallant boy, whom thou so dearly lov'st.
By me he supplicates thee for his life :
Then save him from a horrid, horrid death.
Mercy, O mercy to thine own brave son !—
And wilt thou drive me mad ? Hear, hear me, Earl ;
Hear me while I have strength or reason left
To urge thee to compassion. Nay, I *will*
Have mercy, or for ever hang upon thee,
And shriek with frantic fury in thine ears,
Cursed be the murderer of an only child !

GONDABERT.

Oh, Edgar, Edgar ! all a father's feelings
Rush on my soul, and bear my honour down.
Thou shalt be saved, and *I* for ever lost !

ELFILIA.

Hide, night, in thy dim cave the sun's young beams,
Where morning may not find them.—'Tis too late
Too late to save him now ! for see the dawn
O'er yonder mist-clad mountain redly breaks.
Evil betide thee to thy last dark hour,
Thou unrelenting man !

GONDABERT.

Ho, within there !

Enter Othmar and Attendants.

Go, haste, and bring the Danish captive forth.

[*Exit Othmar.*

ELFILIA.

Hear'st thou those shouts? That death-trump is his knell.
Pale are his brows, as crowned with flowers he stands
Beside the altar. Now he casts around
A mournful glance, but no deliverer comes,—
No ransom, no redemption from the grave.
The fiend-like priest stands ready.—Hark! the horn
Wails its last signal. Now he lifts the knife—
He strikes!—(*shrieks.*) Ha! how the blood-streams
gush! he falls!

Hurl me amid the flames,

That I may perish with him! Ha! ha! ha! [*Falls.*

GONDABERT.

Gently bear her in.

[*Elfilia is borne off by the Attendants.*

*Enter Othmar with Evanda, muffled up in the minstrel
robe of Rogvalla, with Guards.*

Chief of the Danish host, thou shalt be free.

EVANDA.

Tyrant, to thy confusion know, that he

Is free already. [*Throws off her disguise.*

I it was who gave

The warrior freedom. Hid in monkish garb,

I to his dungeon visitation paid,

And, as in that disguise he safely fled,

Remained thy captive in his gloomy cell.

GONDABERT.

Sure Heaven at length the vial of its wrath

Hath emptied on my head ! Hast thou, whom I
So fondly loved, my deadliest foe let loose ?
Traitor ! that love is changed to fellest hate !
With speed send forth a herald to the Dane,
And tell that wild freebooter of the sea,
If he send not, unharmed, my Edgar back,
I will take off Evanda's head, and hang
Her body o'er my walls !

EVANDA.

Dark homicide,
I fear thee not ; a Danish woman
Now triumphs o'er thee, and defies thy rage. [Exit.

GONDABERT.

There is one only way. Call forth my guards !
I'll seek these Danes, and rescue from their knives
My gallant boy, or perish on his ashes. [Exit.

SCENE IV.—*A wild Heath. In the centre of the stage a large cromlech, or rock-altar, with steps leading up to it. A fire blazing on the ground ; the cold grey tints of morning on the distant mountains. A storm, with thunder and lightning.—Wild and solemn music.*

Enter a train of Danish women, strewing the altar and ground with flowers ; then Ivor and officers, leading a procession of Danish Soldiers, with banners, horns, and trumpets. Then the Chief-Priest, bearing the sacrificial knife, Edgar following in chains, and crowned with a garland ; a train of Priests behind him. Edgar is made to ascend the altar during the chorus, the Chief-Priest standing beside him prepared to strike.

CHORUS.

During which the thunder continues very loud.

Sound the trump, and sound the horn,
Hail to Odin's sacred morn !
Hark ! his thunders roll on high,
His glories fill the burning sky.
Turn the captive to the north,
Let his blood gush freely forth !
Strike ! as peals his death-hymn far,
The victim to our god of war !

Strike !—strike !—strike ! [Thunder.

[As the Priest lifts his arm to stab Edgar, shouts
without and voices.

Rogvalla ! Rogvalla !

Enter Rogvalla, the Danish officers flock round him.

GRAND CHORUS.

Triumph ! triumph ! he is free !
Revenge ! revenge ! and victory !
England, blood for blood now calls,
Flames shall scathe thy princely halls !
Thou shalt rue St. Brice's night,
And sink, the slave of Denmark's might !

Enter Frotho.

FROTHO.

The Earl of Devon hath stormed the camp and slain
Our stoutest Danes, and, like a raging lion,
He hither comes. Speed, warriors, to your ships !

*Enter Gondabert and Othmar with Saxon Soldiers,
driving in the Danes.*

GONDABERT—(*entering.*)

Spare not a man!—

Now, Dane, shalt thou again be in my power.

[*Rogvalla springs on the cromlech, snatches the knife from the Priest, and points it at the breast of Edgar.*]

ROGVALLA.

Advance another step, and I this knife

Will, reeking with thy son's blood, at thee hurl!

GONDABERT.

Ha! my loved boy, what in the tiger's grasp?

Withdraw thy blade.—Victory how art thou checked

In thy career of glory. Spare him! spare him!

The conqueror's triumph in the father's feelings

Is lost and perished. See; proud Gondabert

Kneels on the ground, and humbly at thy hand

Implores for mercy to his guiltless son.

ROGVALLA.

On one condition only.

GONDABERT.

Name it, name it.

ROGVALLA.

That thou before thy Saxon guards confess

I am the son of thy ill-fated brother,

And heir to his possessions.

GONDABERT.

Perish my son,

Dear as I love him, ere my lips shall stain

My honour with such——

[*Hesitates.*]

EDGAR.

Let me die, my father,

With glory die, rather than thou shouldst yield

Thy honour to the injustice of this robber.

ROGVALLA.

Justice then strike ! and for the father's crimes
Let his son's blood, by this avenging arm,
Stream forth to appease the spirit of the dead.

GONDABERT.

Hold, monster, hold ! The dead, if they are conscious,
Must be avenged, appeased ; for misery's flood
Rolls o'er me with so strong and deep a tide,
That I amid its billows soon must sink.
Pity a father's agonies ! I am
Not used to tears, but anguish for my child
Wrings from my iron heart these bitter drops.
He is the only being whom I love,
The only one on earth that now loves me.
Oh, then forbear, nor send him from my heart,
And I will heap rewards and blessings on thee.

Enter Elfilia.

ELFILIA.

Ah, he still lives ! and we may yet be blest.
Why dost thou threaten with that deadly knife ?
Claim'st thou a victim for thy horrid gods ?
Here, I this bosom offer to the blow :
My life for Edgar's, stern-browed warrior, take.

ROGVALLA.

I cannot listen to the wail of women :
His life, base Gondabert, hangs on thy breath.
Proclaim thyself a murderer, and he lives ;
Be dumb, and thou shalt see his spouting blood
Gush o'er this flinty altar to thy feet.

GONDABERT.

And must he, must he perish for my crimes ?

ELFILIA.

Perish? No, no; thou shalt not let him perish.
Swear thou art guilty of the blackest crimes,
Guilty of blood!—ay, e'en of kindred blood!
Rather than let yon fell destroyer slay
Thy son before thy face.

GONDABERT.

Eternal fires were bliss to what I feel!
I'll not confess—together we will die!

ELFILIA.

Ay, ruthless father, we'll together die!
Away! the mightiest here shall stay me not!
The daughter of the Earl of Gloucester mounts
The stone of death, and through her heart the knife
Shall only reach her Edgar's guiltless bosom.

ROGVALLA.

Thus, then, thou slayer of thy son, this arm
Strikes the avenging blow!

GONDABERT.

I yield!

I yield!—thou art——

ROGVALLA.

Speak, homicide!—

GONDABERT.

Oh, horrible! O damning infamy!
Thou art—yes, yes, thou art— [With violent effort.
The son of my lost brother, and his heir.

[Sinks exhausted into the arms of the Saxon Soldiers. Shouts from the Danes; flourish of music. Rogvalla drops the knife and unbinds Edgar, who embraces Elfilia, and they both rush from the altar towards Gondabert.]

GONDABERT.

Off! touch me not.—

I am polluted, stained with shame and blood !
To save thy life, I have confessed my guilt,
And fallen from glory's height to rise no more !
This is thy work, Ambition.—Ha ! the morn
Is dawning on me ; never more shall I
Look on its lovely brightness. Fall, ye rocks !
Ye mountains cover me ! It is not day—
Eternal flames their lurid glare spread round me.
I'm lightning-smitten ! Oh, for some cooling draught
To quench the fire within ! This is the balm
[Stabs himself.

For pangs like mine. The grave will yield repose.
Edgar,—for thee I die—forgive me—O—

[Gondabert joins the hands of Edgar and Elfilia,
and dies. Evanda enters to Rogvalla, and all the
characters form a picture as the curtain falls.

NOTES.

- (1) *While I behold the stern usurping Thane,
In splendour clad, tread like a god the earth. . . p. 6.*

“The French and Norman nobility admired the fine persons, the flowing hair, and the beautiful dresses of the English nobles.”—*Asser. Vita Ælfredi.*

“Persons of rank and wealth, of both sexes, among the Danes and Anglo-Saxons, seem to have been very fond of ornaments of gold, as gold chains and bracelets.”—*Dr. Henry, v. 4.*

“The Anglo-Saxon chiefs and kings were called givers of gold chains and bracelets.”—*Chron. Saxon, p. 112.*

- (2) *and toil, yoked to the plough,
For food his dogs would scorn. . . p. 6.*

“Let every man know his *teams of men, of horses and oxen.*”
—*Wilk. Leg. Sax. p. 47.*

In the laws of Ethelred the Unready, the era which this tragedy illustrates, the price of a man, or slave, among those of other things, is fixed at one pound Saxon, or 2*l.* 16*s.* 3*d.* sterling. The price of a hawk, or a greyhound, was the same as that of a man.

“In the year 1015, an express law was made in England to prevent *parents* from selling their own children, with which they used to supply the French markets.”—*Sharon Turner.*

“It is well known that a large portion of the Anglo-Saxon population were in a state of slavery. They were bought and sold with land, and were conveyed in the grants of it promiscuously with the cattle and other property upon it. In the Anglo-Saxon wills, those wretched beings were given away precisely as we now dispose of our plate, our furniture, or our money.”—*Hist. Anglo-Sax.*

- (3) *the daintiest cheer
The garden, forest, flood, and harvest yield. . . p. 6.*

“Gardening was not unknown to the Saxons. Brithnod, the first abbot of Ely, was celebrated for the excellent gardens

and orchards which he made, stocking them with a variety of shrubs, herbs, and fruit-trees."—*Apud Gale*.

Malmesbury exhibits the island of Thorney as the picture, says Sharon Turner, of a paradise: amidst the marshes abounding in trees, was a fine green plain, as smooth and level as a stream; every part was cultivated; here apple-trees arose, there vines crept along the fields, or turned round poles. Yet he adds one trait so expressive of loneliness, as to throw a gloom over the charms of nature.—"When a man comes, he is applauded like an angel." Some years ago, we ourselves visited this spot, and we shall always recollect with pleasure the kindness and hospitality which we received from the inhabitants of Thorney.

(4) *Furred robes they wear, bedizened o'er with gold.* . p. 6.

Witlaf, king of Mercia, gives, in his charter to the Abbey of Croyland, his purple mantle and his golden veil, embroidered with the history of Troy.

"Furs of various kinds were used by persons of both sexes in lining their tunics and mantles."—*Dr. Henry*, v. 4.

(5) *Grasp in their hands a spear, the sign of freedom.* . p. 6.

The meetings of the freemen and landholders were called weapon-tacks, or the touch of arms, because every one touched the spear of the chief magistrate, who was present, with his spear, in token of his submission to his authority and readiness to fight under him. A spear in his hand was an essential part of the dress of an Anglo-Saxon Thane, or gentleman, by which he was distinguished, and without which he never stirred abroad. Vide *Leges Edwardi Regis apud Wilkins*. When a Saxon slave was made free, a spear was put into his hands.

(6) *To touch the tuneful harp, to grasp a spear,
And in the forest with a falcon sport,
Are crimes deemed worthy stripes and banishment.* . p. 7.

By the laws of Wales, a harp was one of the three things that were necessary to constitute a gentleman, *i. e.* a freeman; and by the same laws, to prevent slaves from pretending to be gentlemen, it was expressly forbidden to teach or to permit them to play upon the harp. Among the Saxons and Danes, those who played upon this instrument were declared gentlemen by law. Their persons were esteemed inviolable; they were admitted to the highest company, and treated with distinguished marks of respect wherever they appeared. A slave could not

have a hawk, which was also the mark of gentility on the finger of a nobleman.

“A master has the same right to his slaves as to his cattle.”—*Leges Wallicæ*.

“If a freeman or ceorl killed a stag in a royal forest, he was degraded to a slave; and if a slave killed one, he was put to death.”—*Constitutiones Canutii, apud Spelman Glos.*

(7) *The lord of Lydford, Devon's high potent Earl.* . p. 8.

Lydford, Lydeford, or Hlidaford, Lidefort, and Lyghatford, now a miserable village, was once a place of much importance. Julius Cæsar is said by Bruce to have made a visit to it shortly after his invasion of this island, but without any authority. In the days of Edward the Confessor it was the king's demesne, or *terra regis*, and the manor extended, as it still does, over the whole forest of Dartmoor. Ethelred II. had a mint at Lydford, the coins of which are known by the letters LV D. LVDA. LVDAN. Two of these coins were in Dr. Hunter's cabinet. In the 19th of Ethelred II. the Danes came to Lydford, after destroying Tavistock Abbey. The foundations of the walls and gates of the town were remaining in the time of Risdon. The ancient keep of the castle, forty feet high, on an artificial mound, is all that is left of its former grandeur. The custody of the castle and Dartmoor chase, was always given to a man of high dignity.

(8) *And in the market sold to some new lord ;
Or, by men-stealers borne beyond the seas,
Pine in far-distant lands.* . . p. 9.

Slaves were incapable of any office of power, trust, or honour. They had no authority over their own wives and children.

“An absolute power of life and death was executed by these lords; and when they married their daughters, a train of useful slaves, chained on to the waggons to prevent their escape, was sent as a nuptial present into a distant country.”—*Gibbon*.

“The portreeve of Lewes in Sussex, was to have four-pence for every man sold in his borough.”—*Scriptores Saxon. Gale edit.*

“Slaves still continued to form one of the most valuable articles of exportation from England in this period.” Men, women, and children were carried out of this island, and, like cattle, exposed to sale in all the markets of Europe.

- (9) *hung with rich tapestry. . . p. 10.*

The arts of tapestry and historical painting were well known to the Saxons. Edelfleda, widow of Brithnod, Duke of Northumberland in the tenth century, presented to the church of Ely "a curtain, which had the history of the great actions of her deceased lord painted upon it, to preserve the memory of his great valour and virtues."

"Among the furniture of their rooms we find hangings, to be suspended on the walls, most of them *silken*, some with the figures of golden birds in needlework, some woven, and some plain. Their love of gaudy colouring was as apparent in these as in their dress, for Aldhelm says, if finished of one colour uniform, they would not seem beautiful to the eye."—*Hist. Anglo-Sax.*

There is the clearest evidence, says Dr. Henry, that the arts of weaving various figures of men or other animals, or flowers, foliages, &c. into cloth, and of embroidering them upon it after it was woven, were practised in England before the end of the seventh century.

- (10) *Or the wild shrieks of that fierce hag who rides
The midnight tempest. . . p. 11.*

Nieneven, the giant hag that rode on the storm, and led the hags and fairies of the North.

- (11) *that island of the north,
Where Nature silent lies in death-like sleep. . . p. 12.*

The Papar, or Irish Christians, resided on this distant island previously to the arrival of the Norwegians. Nadodd, its first discoverer in the ninth century, gave the name of Snæland (the land of snow) to this island, which Floki, the Norwegian pirate, changed to Iceland.

- (12) *Crimsoning the skies with fire
With gorgeous banners rustling to the blast,
And fearful din of arms. . . p. 12.*

Gmelin gives a most terrific account of the Aurora-borealis on the borders of the Icy-sea. The animals are struck with terror, the hunters' dogs crouch on the ground, while the streams of light crackle, sparkle, whistle, and hiss, like artificial fire-works. Hearne says, "I have frequently heard them making a rustling and crackling noise, like the waving of a large flag in a fresh gale."—Sir Charles Giesecke, who fre-

quently observed these lights in Greenland, asserts nearly the same.

(13) *and the sacred laws
Of honour and of knighthood bid thee yield. . . p. 15.*

Knighthood was well known to the northern nations. Abbo, a contemporary of Dunstan, in his account of the death of St. Edmund, King of East Anglia, makes the King say to the Danes, "I have always shunned the reproach of disgrace, and especially of cowardly abandoning my knights."—*Sharon Turner*, v. ii.

(14) *My mother knew the deep thoughts of the heart,
And her prophetic spirit is upon me. . . p. 16.*

Witches, fatal sisters, or prophetesses, were held in high respect among the northern nations.

"These admired magicians and fortune-tellers were commonly old women, for whom the Anglo-Saxons, as well as their ancestors the Germans, entertained a very great veneration, and in whom they believed an inferior divinity resided."—*Vide Tacit. de Marib. German. c. 8.*

Among the Danes, according to their old historian Bartholin, these witches, or prophetesses, travelled with all the pomp and retinue that waited on Queens, and were always received and treated with the highest respect.

(15) *She on my vassals freedom shall bestow. . . p. 17.*

"We have many instances of the emancipation of slaves: A landholder in Edgar's time, who had thirty men on his grounds, directed that out of these, thirteen should be liberated as lot should decide; so that, placed in the highway, they might go wherever they pleased. Sometimes the charitable kindness of others redeemed them. Our wise and benevolent Alfred directed one of his laws to lessen the number of the enslaved. He could not emancipate those who were then in servitude, nor their future families, without a violent convulsion of the right of property which then subsisted; and the *general resistance* would have made the romantic attempt not only ineffectual, but pernicious, both to those he wished to benefit, and to society at large. But what he could do safely, he performed. He procured it to be enacted by the Witenagemot, that if any one should in future buy a Christian slave, the time of his servitude should be limited to six years, and that on the seventh he

should be free without any payment, and depart with the wife and clothes he had at first. But if the lord had given him the wife, both she and her children were to remain. If he should choose to continue a slave, he might do so. This law struck a decisive blow at slavery in England; it checked the future multiplication of slaves; it discouraged their sale and purchase; it established a system of legal emancipation, and gave the masters a deep interest in the kind treatment of the slaves then belonging to them, to preserve the race.—*Hist. Anglo-Sax.*

- (16) *My father to the house of Gondabert*
Was a retainer, and held lands in fee. . . p. 21.

“If a ceorl or freeman (a kind of gentleman farmer) had a greater propensity to arms than to learning, trade, or agriculture, he then became the *sithcundman*, or military retainer to some potent and warlike lord, and was called the *huscarle* of such an earl.”—*Spelman's Glos.* If the huscarle so far obtained the favour of his chief as to be presented with five hides of land, or a gilt sword, helmet, and breastplate as a reward for his valour, he was considered as an inferior Thane. Here is another certain proof that the feudal system was known and practised by the Saxons.

- (17) *E'en my dreams*
Were wild imaginings of sweet romance. . . p. 21.

Bede gives an account of the Saxon Scald, or poet, called Cædmon, who was a monk in the Abbey of Streaneshalch in the seventh century, and who was so inspired with the poetical genius, that he composed his best poems in his sleep, and repeated them as soon as he awoke.

- (18) *and sternly fierce,*
When moved with anger, as its own dark storms. . . p. 23.

“A storm on Dartmoor bears little resemblance to storms in general. It is awful, perilous, astounding, and pitiless; and woe to the stranger who in a dark night, without a guide, is forced to encounter it.”—*Notes to Carrington's Dartmoor.*

- (19) *and on foreign shores*
A master find to tame thy daring spirit. . . p. 25.

“Some young men were exported from Northumberland to be sold according to a custom of that country, where the people

sell their nearest relatives for their own advantage, a custom which we see them practise even in our own days."—*William of Malmesbury*.

"Great numbers of unhappy men, women, and children were carried out of this island, and, like cattle, exposed to sale in all the markets of Europe."—*Dr. Henry's Hist. Gr. Brit.*

(20) *Let me die unhouseled.* . . p. 26.

From the Saxon *Husel*, the Sacrament. "Unhouseled, unanointed, and unknelled:" for so, I have little doubt, was originally written by Shakspeare that line in *Hamlet*, which has so much puzzled his commentators; each word alluding to the last rites of the Catholic church.

(21) *To rouse the tusked boar, the wolf, and elk.* . . p. 30.

"William of Malmesbury speaks of the wolf (whence several places in Devon have their prefix) and the *winged serpent*; and though the latter may be fabulous, it is indisputable that bears, wolves, foxes, boars, martens, badgers, otters, wild bulls and cows of a milk-white, similar to those described by Bæthius in the Caledonian forest, and which were at one time common in Great Britain,—perhaps the lynx, goats, hares, stags, and red deer, abounded throughout the moorish district."—*Notes to Carrington's Dartmoor*.

Fitz-Stephen informs us that in his time, the twelfth century, the wild bull, the bison, or bonassus, roamed at large in the great forest of Middlesex. The species exist to this day in Chillingham Park.

"The bear shall be on the heath, old and terrible."—*Saxon Poem*.

"The best hunted meat is the stag, and the hare, and the wild boar, and the bear."—From a curious old Tract in Welch, on Hunting and Field-sports, preserved by Dr. John Davies.

Of the elk being a native of Britain, we have spoken in the former series.

(22) *A dark disease of mind some youthful witch
Hath on thee, Edgar, cast, and marred thy brain.* . p. 33.

Mackenzie tells us that a poor girl was to die for witchcraft, whose real crime was, that she had attracted too great a share, in the lady's opinion, of the attention of the laird.

"They seem to have used philtres; for it is also made

punishable if any one should use witchcraft to produce another's love, or should give him to eat or drink with magic."—*Hist. Anglo-Sax.* v. iii.

- (23) *Let all my warmen and retainers hold
Themselves in readiness. . . p. 37.*

See Note 16.

- (24) *Who dare not lift the mead-cup to their lips. . . .
Without the fear of death. . . p. 38.*

"If an Englishman presumed to drink in the presence of a Dane, without his express permission, it was esteemed so great a mark of disrespect, that nothing but his instant death could expiate it. The English were so intimidated, that they would not adventure to drink, even when invited, till the Danes had pledged their honour for their safety; which introduced the custom of pledging each other in drinking, of which some vestiges are still remaining among the common people."—*Pontopidan Gesta et Vestigia Danorum.*

"When an Englishman met a Dane on a bridge, or in a narrow path, where he could not avoid him, he was obliged to stand still with his head uncovered, and in a bowing posture, as soon as the Dane appeared, and to remain in that position till he was out sight."—*Ibid.*

The Litany of these times contained the following petition: "A furore Normannorum libera nos, Domine."

"The Danish soldiers who were quartered upon the English in the reigns of Edgar the Peaceable, and of Ethelred the Unready, were the beaux of the times, and were particularly attentive to the dressing of their hair; which they combed at least once every day, and thereby captivated the affections of the English ladies."—*Dr. Henry.*

- (25) *Victory to us have given in fields of glory,
And bowed their raven-banners to the Cross. . . p. 41.*

When Corinth was besieged by the Saracens of Africa and the Slavonians of Peloponnesus, the citizens in a sally drove the barbarians from their gates, and the glory of the victory was ascribed to the phantom of St. Andrew the Apostle, who fought for them in the foremost ranks.

"When the Emperor Theodosius, near the foot of the Julian Alps, fought against Arbogastes the Frank, who had murdered Valentinian, and placed Eugenius the Rhetorician on the throne of the West, the spirits of St. John and St. Philip appeared to

him on horseback, as Theodoret affirms. This is the first instance of Apostolic chivalry, if we except the martial apparition of Constantine, which was afterwards so common in the Crusades.”—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

“In the celebrated battle of Ethandūne, Alfred the Great, seeing a standard-bearer leading on one of his divisions with great bravery, pointed him out to his warriors as St. Neot himself at their head. This belief increased their enthusiasm.”—*Anglo-Saxons*, v. ii.

These celestial warriors are only copies from the heathen, sufficient examples of which may be found in the machinery of Homer and Virgil. When Aquileia was besieged by the ferocious barbarian, Maximin, the inhabitants believed that Belenus, their tutelar deity, fought in person for their defence.

(26) *What witchcraft's this ?*

I have no spell to call thee from the tomb. . . p. 43.

“Scinlæca was a species of phantom, or apparition, and was also used as the name of the person who had the power of producing such things: it is, literally, a shining dead body.—Galdor-cræftig implies one skilled in incantations; and Northwyrtha is, literally, a worshipper of the dead.”—*Hist. Anglo-Saxons*, v. iii.

(27) *To-morrow, when thou hear'st*

St. Brice's heavy death-knell, let him die. . . p. 49.

Numerous passages in the Saxon chronicles and laws lead us to believe, that the Saxon Earls, after the union of the Octarchy, enjoyed a power approaching to sovereignty, derived from the station which their kingly predecessors held. This seems apparent from the regal diadem on the seal of Alfric, Duke of Mercia, which has been lately found near Winchester.

“They obtained the power of supreme jurisdiction, both civil and criminal, within their own territories; the right of coining money, together with the privilege of carrying on war against their private enemies in their own name, and by their own authority. Such was the state of Europe from the seventh to the eleventh century.”—*Robertson's Life of Charles V.*, v. 1.

The lord of Spitchwich within the forest of Dartmoor, and the Abbot of Buckfastleigh, had to a late period the power of inflicting capital punishment on their vassals.

(28) *others tossing knives and balls in the air. . . p. 50.*

It may surprise many to find the feats of Indian jugglers

practised by the Anglo-Saxons ; but we have undoubted evidence of the fact: these, as well as various other exercises, formed part of the profession of the Saxon glee-men, as is evident from the 17th plate in Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, taken from a MS. in the Cottonian Library, marked Vespasian, A. i. which he thus describes:—"We there see a man throwing three balls and three knives alternately into the air, and catching them one by one as they fall, but returning them again in rotation. To give the greater appearance of difficulty to this part, it is accompanied with the music of an instrument resembling the modern violin." The MS. in which this painting is preserved, was written as early as the eighth century.—*Strutt's Sports and Pastimes*, p. 133: ditto *Hone's ed.* p. 173. Vide also, *Sharon Turner's Hist. Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iv. p. 98.

(29) *Here the wolf,
The grey wolf of Dunheved's mountain dwells. . . p. 50.*

Dunheved, the ancient name of Launceston, and residence of the British Dukes of Cornwall.

(30) *Ere on thy brows the priest, thou false one, bind
The sacred bridal wreath. . . p. 51.*

"Both the bride and bridegroom were crowned with flowers by the priest, which were kept in the church for that purpose."
—*Olai Magni*, p. 553.

The Druids exhibited flowers at their festivals. In the Grecian ceremonies, flowers were scattered in profusion, and the Romans founded floral games 173 years before Christ; which games were re-established at the May festivals in 1323, by the Troubadours.

(31) *An honourable harvest do I reap
From cities sacked and villages in flames. . . p. 55.*

The people of Scandinavia, comprehending the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, breathed nothing but war, and were animated with a most astonishing spirit of enterprise and adventure. By their numerous fleets they rode triumphant in all the European seas, and carried desolation and terror to the coasts of Germany, France, Spain, Italy, England, Scotland, and Ireland, to say nothing of the East, into which they also penetrated. They are well known to have used the skulls of their enemies for their banquet-cups, and Temagin, or Zingis Khan, drank out of the skull, encased in silver, of the Khan of the Keraites; who, under the name of Prester John, corresponded with the Roman Pontiff and the Kings of Europe.

- (32) *for it was forged*
By fairy dwarfs amid their secret caves. . . p. 56.

The northern nations, who were Scythians, believed in a race of dwarfs who inhabited the rocky regions, and who forged in their secret caverns all kinds of weapons of warfare, to which, by their magic skill, they imparted the most wonderful powers.

Witches, or magicians, were supposed by the Scandinavians to possess the power of granting to whom they thought proper, swords and armour of proof, girdles of defence, and caps that, every way they were turned, should direct the weather.

- (33) *who bows not to earth*
And cries, Hail! my lord Dane. . . p. 57.

For several ages after this period, a lofty insolent person was called a lord Dane.

"The towns through which the Danes passed, exhibited the most horrible scenes of misery and desolation. Venerable old men lying with their throats cut at their own doors, the streets covered with the bodies of young men and women, without heads, legs, or arms, and of matrons and virgins, who had been first dishonoured and then put to death."—*Wallingford, apud*

- (34) *Trust him? Ay, would I, by my golden bracelets. . . p. 59.*

"The Danes esteemed no oath so sacred and inviolable as that which they swore by their golden bracelets."—*Asser. Vita, Æthelward's Chron.* l. iv. c. 3.

- (35) *We'll quaff the wine-cup mingled with our blood,*
And swear eternal friendship. . . p. 60.

"The romantic attachment of the warriors of the North who entered into a compact of friendship, is well known to all versed in Scandinavian manners; it was confirmed by the superstitious ceremony of mingling their blood in wine, and drinking it. *They even pledged themselves not to survive each other.* They were called Stall-brodre. When Baldwin II. and last Latin Emperor of Constantinople, to aid his sinking cause, formed a dishonourable alliance with the Turks and Comans, to please the latter a dog was sacrificed between the two armies, and the contracting parties tasted each other's blood as a pledge of their friendship; and a Comanian chief, or king, was buried near one of the gates of Constantinople, with a train of followers and horses *alive.*"—See Joinville.

The chiefs of the North were often Scaldi, as well as warriors. Regnor Lodbrog, King of Denmark, united (as was not uncommon in that age) the characters of king, warrior, poet, and pirate.

"Anlaft entered the camp of the Saxon King, Athelstan, under the disguise of a Scald, and Alfred did the same in the camp of the Danes. When the hordes of the Tartar Huns retired to the West, from the limits and dominion of the Chinese empire, into the extensive plains of Sogdiania, they still retained one vestige of their ancient barbarism ; for when a chieftain died, his companions or retainers who had shared his liberality and wealth, were buried alive with him in the same grave."—*Procopius de Bell. Persico*, l. i. c. 3.

(36) *In the far-sounding cutaract's solemn roar,
Whose grandeur fills the wild. . . p. 60.*

"The roaring of torrents in the moor, after heavy rains, is sublime to a degree inconceivable by those who have never heard this impressive music in a wild and solitary district."—*Notes to Carrington's Dartmoor*.

And here we are happy to have it in our power to offer a simple testimony of respect to our late dear friend, Mr. Carrington, with whom, since the publication of the *Royal Minstrel* till his lamented death, we were in the habit of frequent correspondence. His poem of *Dartmoor*, from which we have extracted the above note, is replete with such glowing images, such just and tender sentiments, as cannot fail to touch the heart of all those who soar above the grovelling conceptions and brutal appetites of the mere ignorant purse-proud worldling. His poetry is equally devoid of raving bombast, of maudlin cant, and dull obscurity, with which the strains of many of our modern "twangling jacks" so much abound. Its melody is exquisite, yet varied ; and its descriptive scenes are the fac-simile of Nature's most beautiful and sublime productions. We have heard that his townsmen of Devonport have it in contemplation to erect a monument to his memory. Such an act would do honour to themselves, but the bard of Devon needs not this just memorial of his merits and his fame. He who has so sweetly sung

"Devonia's lovely land of flowers and song,"

shall never lack a monument to celebrate his name while Dartmoor's lofty tors and mountains of eternal granite lift their majestic summits to heaven, a resting-place for the cloud and the storm,

(37) *Then sign this parchment with thy mark and seal.* . . p. 70.

“Seals were used for the purpose of impressing the wax, which closed the epistles of the Anglo-Saxons. The seal of Ethelward, Bishop of Dunwich, (830-70) has lately been discovered, about two hundred yards from the gate of the Monastery of Eye, by a labourer; who gave it to the child of a workman employed on a neighbouring farm: the child threw it on the fire, from which its mother rescued it. It was afterwards purchased by Mr. Hudson Gurney, and presented to the British Museum.”—*Archæologia*, ii. p. 480.

(38) *And feel 'tis honest—noble to destroy
All of thy lineage who my rights usurp.* . . p. 71.

“In those times (the Anglo-Saxon) too many, who by their rank and wealth were entitled to be members of the supreme council of the nation, were notorious thieves and robbers.”—*Dr. Henry*.

Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, describes the implacable hatred of the Britons against the English nation and the Catholic church.

(39) *I marked his shoulders with a burning arrow.* . . p. 72.

“When Basil Zuski, of the ancient family of Rurick, the first sovereign of Russia, ascended the throne in 1606, the Czarina, wife of Demetrius, (said to have been the son of the murdered Iwan, and deposed by Zuski,) with her father were sent to prison. The child was privately conveyed to the Ukraine, under the care of a faithful cossack, and the priest who baptized him marked on his shoulders, in aquafortis, ‘This is Demetrius, the son of the Czar Demetrius.’ This being discovered as he grew up, while bathing in a public bath, and the news of the discovery reaching the ears of Stanislaus, King of Poland, he invited him to his court, and treated him as the heir to the throne of Russia. After the death of this prince, he was obliged to withdraw to Holstein, where he lived some time in obscurity; but at length the Duke, in consideration of the acquittal of a debt due to Zuski, for a sum of money lent to the Holstein ambassador, sent the young prince bound to Moscow, in which city he was publicly beheaded in the year 1625.”

Ruric was prince of the Waregi, who obtained the dominion of Russia about the period of King Alfred's youth, and fixing his seat at Novogardia, adorned it with many noble buildings.

(40)

*on his flesh**To carve the Danish eagle,—a keen torment**That joys me to retaliate on those dogs. . . p. 72.*

Carving the eagle, or stripping the skin from the shoulders and turning the flaps back, was a favourite mode of torture practised by the Danes on their prisoners.

(41)

*The fearful spectre rushes,**In lightning clad, upon me. . . p. 73.*

"It is asserted of Theodric the Goth, who after a life of virtue and glory descended with shame and guilt into the grave, that he was alarmed by the invisible terrors of futurity. One evening, when the head of a large fish was served on the royal table, he suddenly exclaimed that he beheld the angry countenance of Symmachus, his eyes glaring fury and revenge, and his mouth armed with long sharp teeth, which threatened to devour him. The monarch instantly retired to his chamber, and, as he lay trembling with aguish cold, under a weight of bed-clothes, he expressed, in broken murmurs to his physician Elpidius, his deep repentance for the murders of Bæthius and Symmachus."

"But if Constans could fly from the people, he could not fly from himself. The remorse of his conscience created a phantom, who pursued him by land and sea, by day and by night; and the visionary Theodosius, presenting to his lips a cup of blood, said, or seemed to say, 'Drink, brother, drink;' a sure emblem of the aggravation of his guilt, since he had received from the hands of the deacon the mystic cup of the blood of Christ."—*Gibbon*.

(42)

*To me are like the wild notes of the swan,**That sings of coming summer to those isles**Amid the polar ocean. . . p. 74.*

"The singing of the swans on the neighbouring lakes, added to the novelty of the scene."—*Dr. Henderson's Iceland*.

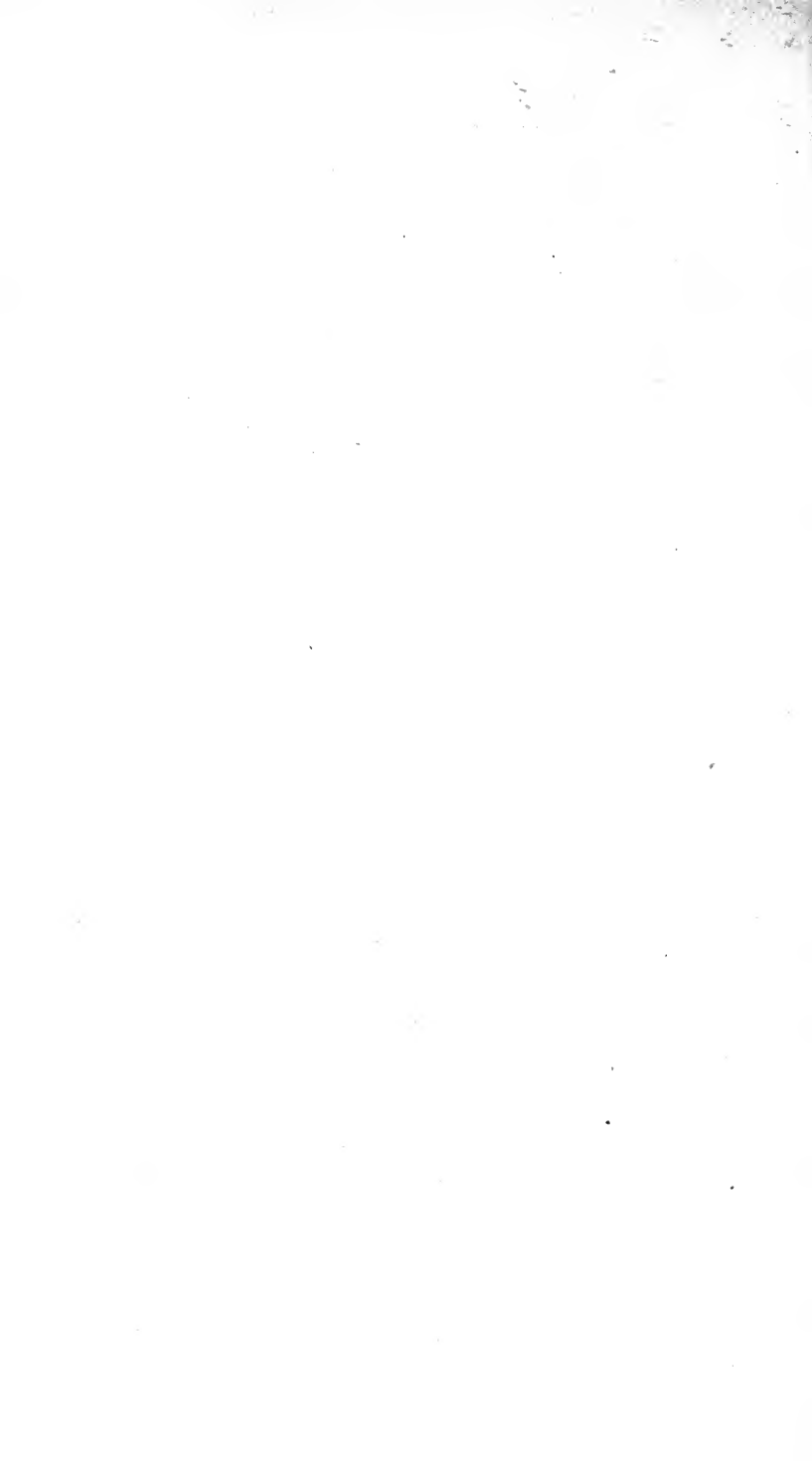
The natives of Iceland compare the singing of the northern swans to the notes of a violin. They are heard at the end of their tedious and dismal winter, when the return of that bird announces the approach of summer: such sounds must therefore be indeed melodious to the Icelanders, which proclaim their release from the long and gloomy horrors of an Arctic winter.

(⁴³) *Proud kings have wreathed, ere now,
Their crowns with low-born beauty's simple flowers.* . p. 86.

“The mother of Athelstan and Edward was called Egwina, a shepherd's daughter of great beauty.—*Vide Malmesb. et Bromt.*

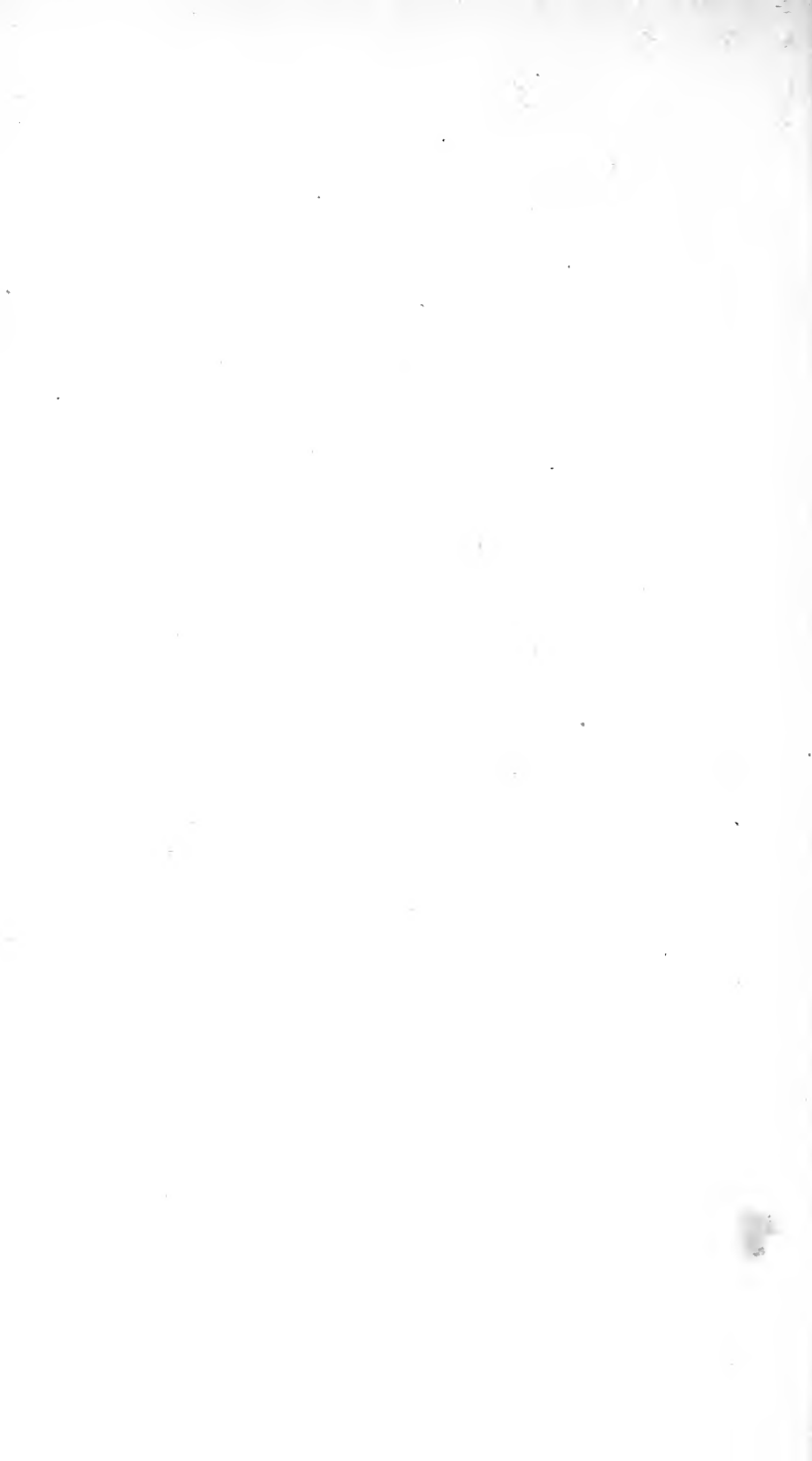
Torfæus says, that the people of Spangareid, an isthmus of Norway, relate, from the accounts of their ancestors, that a golden harp came on shore in a small bay near their residence, in which was found a little girl. She was taken care of, brought up, afterwards kept sheep, became famed for her beauty, and married a Danish king. Her name was Otlanga. They show a hill, called Otlanga's hill. The bay in which she was found is named Gall-siken, or golden bay, and the stream near it is called Kraakabecker, or the rivulet of Kraaka, which was another name belonging to this female.

END OF THE ENGLISH SLAVE.



THE DEVOTED ONE.

A TRAGEDY.



TO
DANIEL CABANEL, ESQ.,
OF BATH,
AS AN HUMBLE BUT SINCERE TOKEN
OF FRIENDSHIP, GRATITUDE, AND ESTEEM
FOR HIS VIRTUES,
THE FOLLOWING DRAMATIC POEM
IS DEDICATED,
BY HIS OBLIGED AND AFFECTIONATE SERVANT,
J. FITZGERALD PENNIE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CANUTE, King of England, Denmark, &c.

WALDIMAR, Son of Zandagast.

GODWIN, a Forester.

ZANDAGAST, Slavonian Captain of the Danish Thingamanna, or Body-guards.

ROLF IRIC, a Norwegian Prince, Duke of Northumberland.

EDRIC, Saxon Duke of Mercia.

TURKEETUL, Duke of East-Anglia.

ULFMANDO, Brother-in-law to Canute.

WULFNOTH, a Ceorl of the Forest, Brother to Edric.

BORNWULF, a Swineherd.

Bishop.

High-priest.

ELGITHA, a Saxon Lady.

ERMINGILD, Mother to Waldimar.

EDITH, Cousin to Canute.

EVORA, Attendant on Edith.

1st Witch. 2nd Witch. 3rd Witch. 4th Witch. 5th Witch.

Guards, Attendants, Priests, &c.

ERA—THE ELEVENTH CENTURY.

THE DEVOTED ONE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Selwood Forest at day-break.*

Enter Godwin and Bornwulf.

BORNWULF.

A cheery morning.

GODWIN.

Ay, the fiery sun,

Bathing his forehead in those purple waves
As he uprises, from his golden locks
Shakes daylight on the world. How like a young
And noble mind, that through the sullen clouds
His abject birth flings on him bravely breaks,
And wins the steep where Fame immortal dwells,
Art thou, proud luminary of the east,
That, bright and brighter still, dost upward soar,
Till the wide earth is covered with thy glory.

BORNWULF.

More of thy flighty dreamings and vain words,
Which few may understand, but I have still
The plague to hear !—while all the toil is mine
To tend thy father's hogs, that but for me

Would stray the saints know where, and soon be lost
In this wild lonesome forest.

GODWIN.

Soul-less clod !

BORNWULF.

A soul-less clod, indeed ! I'd have thee know
That I am thought, among the maids at home,
As brisk and merry as a summer bee.
A clod, forsooth ! What whimsey next will fill
Thy crazy-smitten brain ?

GODWIN.

Why thou art scarce
One poor degree above the swine thou serv'st.
Thou look'st on Nature, but thine eyes discern
None of her heartfelt beauties ; thou canst hear
Her many voices, but they never come
On thy dull ears in a rich flood of music.

BORNWULF.

Why I behold skies, mountains, rocks, and trees,
And what canst thou see more ? I hear the streams
Which keep a constant brawling ; hear the wind,
That blustering bully, and the noisy birds
Whistling, I ween, for breakfast, like a herd
Of tame hogs squeaking round their feeder when
Their wonted meal is due. I know not which
Is the most pleasing sound, the swine or birds ;
But this I know,—my ears are quick as thine,
Nor is my sight more dim.

GODWIN—(*not heeding him.*)

O, how my soul
Aspires to win renown in arms ; to mix
In council and in camp with warrior Thanes ;
To be the leader of a gallant host ;

To hear the shout of armies as I come
Victorious from the field, and then to shine
Amid the courtly throng ; to have my deeds
Sung to the sweet-toned harp of scald, and be
Companion meet for kings !

BORNWULF.

I long have thought
Thy shallow wits were ebbing fast away,
And certain is it now they've left thee dry
As any brook in summer. Blessed Mary !
Companion to a king ! Companion thou
Art to thy father's hogs amid these woods,—
A fitting school in which to learn the airs
And manners of a court.

GODWIN.

Fool ! hold thy peace.
True dignity and noble bearing are,
Like passions, born with him whom genius crowns.
Kings may bestow high titles, but can give
Nor virtue nor desert : he who hath these,
Is far more noble than the proudest chief
Whose only honours are the alms of princes.
Far off I can discern that land of promise,
Where I would dwell with Fame. The sun is on
Its golden shores and emerald bowers of light ;
But a wild stormy sea between us lies,
Impassable to me. Yet better far
To bravely breast the surges, though I perish,
Than on this desert strand to sit me down,
Despairing like a coward.

BORNWULF.

Thy good father
Would wax right wrathful, if he heard thee talk

So like a brainless ninny. 'Tis not I
That am the fool. No, no ; let wise men judge
If from my lips such mad words ever fell.

GODWIN.

My father ? He, kind easy man, lives on
Contented with his cottage-home and farm,
The master of a few poor flocks and herds,
And stupid slaves like thee : he never dreamt
Of those gay scenes that shed the golden light
Of fairy-land round rank and lordly power :
He never felt the unsatisfied desire
Great and renowned to live,—to win a name
Eternal in the annals of his country.
He is content
To live as his fore-fathers lived, to breathe
Awhile in simple ease, and then descend
To mingle with their dust in dark oblivion :
He looks on greatness and its witching pomp
As listless as the evening wolf regards
The queen of heaven, when on her forehead shine
The thickly gathered sunbeams.—I would be
That savage wolf and nightly howl for food,
Rather than live a life so meanly worthless.

BORNWULF.

Bless me ! a wolf ? And why may he not lead
A life to him as happy as a Thane
With all his wealth enjoys ?

GODWIN.

Dull-minded carl !

O, there is one, one only path for me.—
Through fields of war that track will I pursue,
And live with glory, or with honour die.
Yes, great I shall be ! for I met the witch,

The dreaded witch of Thorswold glen, what time,
Last night, the golden star of eve arose.

BORNWULF.

Sweet saints protect us! Ay, 'tis she that hath
Bewitched thee thus.—'Thou'rt labouring now, I see,
Under some powerful spell. I'll put two straws
To-night across the threshold. ⁽¹⁾

GODWIN.

Once in thy life
Thou, beetle-headed sage! hast wisely spoken.
I am indeed beneath a potent spell,
The spell of future greatness.—“Hail, brave Earl!
For such thou shalt be,” cried the prophetess:
“Thrice hail, thou father of a mighty king!
Who born to conquer, yet subdued will fall.
A queen shall be thy daughter, England's queen,
A virgin queen, yet wedded to a king!
More seek not thou to know.” Mysterious words! ⁽²⁾

BORNWULF.

Mad! raving mad! Well, I'll go seek the hogs,
Whose heads have wiser notions far than thine.
There is some sense in them, but none in thee. [*Exit.*

GODWIN.

There have been many, with proud deeds emblazed
In fame's bright chronicles, who wisely caught
The fair advantage of the times on which
Their fortune cast them; but who still had trudged
Through life's dull pilgrimage in peace, and found
A mean unlaurelled grave, had not stern war
And stormy faction, like a swelling flood,
To glory onward borne them. These are days
To call *me* into action; action will beget,
If bravely carried, fame,—and fame bring honours,

Degree above degree, till I have won
As great a name as ever graced an age.

Enter Ulfmando.

ULFMANDO.

Lost in the mazes of this forest——Ha,
A youth !—of goodly aspect, too. I will accost him,
Although a Saxon by the garb he wears.

GODWIN.

A warrior, and a Dane !

ULFMANDO.

Even so, young man.
In yesterday's great battle I pursued
A remnant of the Saxon host, who fled
For safety to these woods ; but when I turned
To join the army of the Danish king,
I sought retreat in vain, and through the night
Have this wolf-haunted desert hopeless roamed
Of succour or escape.

GODWIN.

Thou art beset
On every side with perils.

ULFMANDO.

But if thou
Wilt be my guide to where the Danish fleet
Lies off the southern coast, or to the camp
Of King Canute, thou shalt be well repaid
For such kind service.

GODWIN.

O, the way is long
Through these inhospitable shades, to where
Thy fleet lies near the shores of Withgar's isle.
The rustic dwellers of this forest land

Thy nation loathe ; and well is known the fate
Of yesterday's most bloody battle, fought
On the red fields of Skorstein. If the serfs
Meet thee, or any of the Danish host,
They will no mercy show ; nor would he find
A milder doom, were it once told who gave
Assistance to their foeman.

ULFMANDO.

Can I doubt
That honour dwells within a form so noble ?
Or think thou wouldst betray a foe who claims
Thy generous pity in the hour of need ?
Then take this ring, this purse with oras filled ;
They shall be freely thine, if thou wilt guide
My steps in safety to the Danish host.

GODWIN—(*after looking at the ring.*)

It is a tempting prize : and some there are
Who bravely would protect—ay, and betray,
For such a gift, a foeman or a friend.
Receive, lord Dane, again thy proffered wealth.
Scorn fall on him who takes a bribe to act
Deeds of sweet charity ! In my poor thoughts,
More noble 'tis to save a suppliant foe,
Than e'en the sternest in the field to quell.
Come to my father's cottage ; thou shalt there
Find food and shelter. When the shades of night
Fall on these woods, I will conduct thee hence ;
And should we safely reach thy friends and home,
Reward me as thou wilt. O, how I love,
Till all my spirit seems on fire, to gaze
Thus on the warrior clad in gleaming arms !
Shall such bright plumes o'er my young brows e'er wave ?
Such mail encase these limbs ?

ULFMANDO.

To me thou seem'st,
Like the strong eaglet, born to soar above
Thy forest eyrie, and a spirit shines
In thy dark eye with most prophetic beams
Of gallant daring ; gentle is thy phrase,
And from thy tongue flows native eloquence
Might shame our courtly chiefs. My forest-boy,
I cannot choose, but trust thee fearlessly.

GODWIN.

And I would rather die, than thou shouldst find
Cause to repent thy trusting.

ULFMANDO.

Forward, then.
Thou shalt be held in honour by the king.

GODWIN.

Propitious Heaven ! the day is come at last,
That gives me earnest of those dreams which haunt
The slumbers of my couch. Farewell ye woods
And gloomy shades, and ye wild birds farewell !
I shall your simple minstrelsy exchange
For courtly harp and war-proclaiming trump.
Farewell ye flocks and herds, a long farewell
To my poor father's home !—The world, the bright,
The blissful, stirring world, is now before me,
For which so oft I on these primrose banks
Have sat me down in bitter spite and wept.
Speed to the ocean, thou slow-toiling sun !
I, at thy setting, like the young moon, shall
Begin to rise in glory.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Forest.**Enter Edith.*

EDITH.

The woods are fragrant with the breath of flowers,
And full of pleasant sounds. Who would not live
With the meek fawn these mossy glades to tread,
Where the sweet violet and the cowslip dwell?
Fair daughters of the sun, ye lift your heads
To meet the first warm kisses of your sire,
As children, after a long absence, greet
Their father's glad return. But where stays Godwin,
That idle youth, who dreams of courts and kings?
Bright is the morn, but I confess his smiles
Would make it still more lovely. O, to me
These ancient woods are happier far than halls
Of regal state, for there——

Enter Godwin.

GODWIN.

My Edith ! ay,
My own dear Edith !

EDITH.

What, romantic youth,
Still walking in thy sleep !—for I perceive,
Thou listless dreamer, by thy merry looks
Thy thoughts are in some brilliant vision wrapt
Of things that shine, but fade. In thy lone walks
Amid this haunted forest, dost thou not
Meet and commune with elves and fairy maids,
And beautiful spirits of the groves and streams,
Who tempt thee with strange love, and o'er thy mind

Their bright enchantments of delusion shed ?
I shall be jealous soon.—The saints amend thee !

GODWIN.

I in this forest no communion hold
With any spirit half so heavenly fair
As thou, my Edith, art. The queen of elves
Looks not so lovely in her moonlit pomp
As thou dost, with those wild flowers in thy locks,
When on me fondly smiling.

EDITH.

Art thou not,
Dear Godwin, dreaming now ?

GODWIN.

No, 'tis reality, and real all
Those dreams of greatness, mocked by thee so oft ;
For I am hither come to bid farewell
To Edith and these gloomy solitudes,
For camps and splendid courts.

EDITH.

Farewell, saidst thou ?
And wilt thou leave thy Edith, and these shades
Where all is peace, and melody, and love,
For palace-halls in which grim Envy dwells,
And Murder lurks to dye his knife in blood ?
Leave these green bowers, steeped in the glittering hues
Of summer suns, where breathes the violet air
In all its early freshness, and the voice
Of the love-speaking turtle still is heard ?
Wilt thou leave these for noisy midnight camps,
For battle-fields, for danger, wounds, and death ?

GODWIN.

Ay, will I, girl, and triumph in th' exchange.
I hate these woodland scenes of idle dulness,

Where men grow cowards, and low ignorance lies
Basking upon a dunghill like the swine.

EDITH.

And canst thou leave thy Edith, too, for aye ?
Leave her alone with solitude and grief ?
Sad will these woods be when thou art away.
To me the flowers will fade, the birds forget
Their merry carols. I shall heed no more
The gentle voice of spring, nor wander here
To list the nightingale at moonlight hour ;
For busy memory would recall the past,
Till my lone heart were broken.

GODWIN.

Leave thee, my dearest Edith, and for ever ?
Am I a thing so barren of all truth ?
Ill thrive my hopes, may honour cast me off,
And shame and scorn pursue me through the world,
If this fond heart to Edith e'er prove false !
When I the warrior's laurel-wreath have won,
To thee I'll come, but not in peasant weeds.
No ; in a chieftain's splendid arms I'll shine,
And thou shalt be a gallant soldier's bride.

EDITH.

Love is a gentle spirit, soft and bright
As moonbeams slumbering on the quiet waters :
Her home is like the dove's, concealed beneath
The fragrant blossoms and the leaves of peace.
With proud Ambition she can never dwell :
He steeps his hand in blood, and offers Love
A sacrifice to power. Greatness is like
The swelling mountain, which in barren pride
Its cloud-veiled summit lifts to meet the skies :
The torrent's roar is heard amid its rocks,

Whose rugged brows the thunder deeply scars :
But humble worth, like the low valley, lies
Sheltered from storms, with silent streams made glad,
And rich in virtue's roseate fruits and flowers.

GODWIN.

What ! shall I dwell in these inglorious shades
A forester, a swineherd all my life,
And perish on the spot which gave me birth ?
Be like the stagnant pool amid the forest,
Which rotting weeds o'ermantle, and the toad
And tadpole make their home ? No ; let *my* course
Be like the mountain cataract in its strength,
With strife still onward dashing, which no rocks
Can bar or hinder ; while my fame shines out,
As gleams that torrent's rainbow to the sun. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in the Cottage of Wulfnoth.*

Enter Wulfnoth and Godwin.

WULFNOTH.

So, thou wilt leave me, Godwin ?

GODWIN.

Ay, my soul

Is wearied with these dull unchanging scenes.

WULFNOTH.

And leave poor Edith, too, thou truant boy,
To follow this lone stranger, this dark chief
Of Danish blood ? to follow the wild bent
Of thy determined will, the beckoning forms
And airy visions of thy heated brain,
Distempered with ambition ?

GODWIN.

Didst thou know,
My much-loved father, how my life has past

Amid the dreamy shadows of these woods
In shaping out the visions of that world,
A land to me unknown, which lies beyond
The borders of this desert ; how I've formed
Proud palaces and halls, like those which eve
Lights up with sunset splendour in the heavens,
And peopled them with kings and mail-clad chiefs,
Whose names are held in honour ; how I've watched
The flame-winged shapes which thronged the midnight
skies,

When o'er the blood-red clouds came forth in arms
The chivalry of heaven ;—
How, as they flashing mixt in battle-strife,
I called them Danes and Saxons, and, when fled
The vanquished host with riven shield and helm,
Shouted, till all the startled woods replied
From their deep solitudes ;—ah ! didst thou know
How then I flung me on the dewy turf
And wept at my low state, burning to mix
In scenes on earth like those bright scenes in heaven,
Thou wouldst not marvel that from hence I go
To seek a warrior's name.

WULFNOTH.

Alas ! my son,
Thy wild imaginings of pomp and power
Are all unlike their dark reality.
Thou dost remind me of the sea-boy who,
Far on the northern ocean's gleamy verge,
City, and battlement, and tower beholds,
With verdant fields and mountains forest-crowned ;
But when his vessel nighs that magic clime
Where human foot ne'er trod, nought finds he there
Save freezing iceberg, naked rock, and surge.

GODWIN.

But fame endureth in its endless course,
Unchanging as the everlasting sun.

WULFNOTH.

Fame ! what is fame ? A passing meteor blaze,
That one brief moment shines,—the next, is nothing.
What numbers, once by deeds of glory fired
With the vain hope of ever-living fame,
In dark forgetfulness have ages slept,
From which no trump can call them to remembrance !
Where are the brazen statues, pillars, towers,
The marble tombs that immortality
Promised to those whose names they registered ?
Dashed, with their founders, by oblivion's wing
'To undistinguished dust !

GODWIN.

Most true: but when I've bravely shaken off
This forest sloth, which heavily doth hang
On all my energies, like a black cloud
Hiding the sunshine from the mountain's brow,
I'll win such martial glory as shall live
Till the proud annals of my country die.

WULFNOTH.

High-aiming youth, think of the cost, if won ;
And when obtained, how worthless for thy pains !
Thou'lt find, my son, the unfaithful court a place
Where traitors thrive, and fawning knaves are cherished ;
Where merit, if found poor, no friends can win,
While wealthy fools are worshipped ; where thy tongue
Must flatter bloated pride, thy knee bend low
To gold-clad baseness ; and where Envy waits
To thrust thee back at every step thou climb'st
In thy aspiring aims.

GODWIN.

O, I was born
To wrestle with opposers. What if fame,
Hereafter fame, be nothing but a sound,
Yet living honour is a glorious thing.
Splendour, and power, and wealth are in her train,
And he who would to her gay smiles prefer
Pale poverty, is at the best an ass,
And merits all the burdens which the hag
Lays on his lank and bony back to bear.

WULFNOTH.

Alas ! with thy ambitious hopes to strive
Is bootless all. But hear me, ere we part,
And I'll a tale unfold shall stir thy wonder.
I have not ever been what now I am :
There was a time when all which thou dost feel
Came o'er my soul in dreams as bright as thine,
And faded, as I fear me thine will fade,
In darkness and in storms.

GODWIN.

Proceed, dear father.

WULFNOTH.

Learn, then, that I Duke Edric's brother am,
That prince of traitors, that perfidious wretch,
Amid the darkness of whose demon heart
There never came one brief redeeming ray
Of mercy, truth, or honour.

GODWIN.

Saints of heaven !

Art thou the brother of a Duke ? (3)

WULFNOTH.

Even so.

An humble peasant was our sire, who lived

As I do now, and died in low content,
As I would die. But we aspired to shine
In camps and courts, and soon in favour rose
With the mind-changing Ethelred, till both
Chieftains of power became. Faithful I stood
To my loved country, which on me drew down
My brother's envy and spiteful hate.
Of treason by his fiend-like arts accused,
And doomed unheard by Ethelred to death,
I fled with some few gallant ships, and roamed
A sea-king o'er the deep. But vain my flight
From Edric's vengeance, whose strong fleet pursued me.
A tempest rose as we prepared for battle,
Which wrecked our vessels on the southern coast.
One poor revenge was mine,—I burnt the ships
Of my fell persecutor: then, dismissing
Those faithful followers who survived the storm,
Sought safety in these woods; where I became
A tiller of the field, and here have found
That peace at last, which courts and kings denied.

GODWIN.

O, may I meet this Duke, when I shall reach
The Danish court——

WULFNOTH.

Beware of him, I charge thee;
He hath the serpent's craft, the adder's fang,
The tiger's thirst for blood: with these, a tongue
That would beguile an angel. Claim thou not
Kindred with him, or soon will he destroy thee.

GODWIN.

I'd rather own myself of wolfish blood,
Than claim him for a kinsman.

WULFNOTH.

Dear-loved boy,
Whate'er betide, let virtue still be thine.
Scorn all dishonest means to make thee great ;
Be modest, but not servile, and should fortune
Crown thy deserts, thine honours wear with meekness,—
'Twill lend them tenfold lustre. Now, farewell !
Perchance, my Godwin, 'tis a last farewell !
I, who may never more that face behold,
Can not restrain these parting tears, which fall
In sorrow on thy bosom. When far hence,
Forget not thou my counsel ; nor forget,
In joy or woe, thy sad and lonely sire.
Whate'er befall, here shalt thou find a home,
And, till I in the cold grave lay me down,
A father's arms to welcome thy return.
Never shall I at night my pillow press
Without a prayer for thee. Farewell, my son !
God and good angels bless thee !

GODWIN.

Do not weep.
I shall return to thine embrace again
With glory on my brow, and joy shall crown
Our happy meeting. Fare thee well, my father.

[*Exit.*

WULFNOTH.

Gone ! gone art thou to me for ever, Godwin !
The sun is set that gave me light and joy !
Life's feeble twilight now is nothing worth,
And night with double-darkness hastens on.
Yet gentle Edith stays.—Alas ! she too
Must quickly bid a long, a last farewell
To me and my poor dwelling. Then shall I

Of both my children be bereaved, and left
Disconsolate indeed ! Selfish and base
It were to keep her here.

Enter Edith.

EDITH.

O, my preserver,
I came with thee to weep ; but I behold
Thy grey hairs bowed with sorrow to the dust :
Then let me haste mine own dim eyes to dry,
And bind with filial love thy broken heart.
Godwin hath left us,—ay, for stranger halls
And dreams of idle pomp ; but thy poor Edith
Will never leave thee. Still at early morn,
And when the shadows of the evening fall,
I will be nigh to aid and cheer thine age ;
In health and sickness shall my prayers ascend,
That Heaven may give thee comfort.

WULFNOTH.

Ah, my child,
Thou too must leave me,—yes, for ever leave me !
The time is come that we must part, and thou
This humble cot, these savage deserts quit,
For courts and regal halls.

EDITH.

Ha ! name them not ;
They to my mind a thousand horrors bring
Of massacre and blood ! O, they recall
That dreadful night, in which the Danes were slain
Throughout the kingdom. Then was my loved sire,
Although an English Earl, stabbed by those fiends
Who, drunk with fury, rushed amid our halls.
Thou know'st—too well, how, struggling with a host

To save my wretched mother's life, he sank
Mangled and gashed, sank at her feet and died !
I heard that mother's wild distracted cries,
As on the marble floor the Saxon foe
Dashed out my brothers' brains ! O God ! I felt
Her last, her agonized embrace, as thou,
By pity urged, didst fold me in thine arms,
And from th' assassins' fiercely-gleaming swords
Bear me in safety, far beyond the gates
Of Dunmarn's blood-drenched palace : nor canst thou
The close of that terrific scene forget,
When the ferocious Duke of Mercia dragged
My frantic mother to the fatal block,—
A princess born of Denmark's royal line,
On whose fair brows the font's ethereal dews
Had been devoutly sprinkled.

WULFNOTH.

'Twas a night
That filled the land with wailing ! Dreadful since
Hath been the retribution of just Heaven
For that foul deed, by hated Edric planned,
Who friend nor foeman spares.

EDITH.

Child as I was,
That night hath images of horror stamped
For ever on my brain ! Oft, in my dreams,
I stand amid those gory halls of death,
Where on me wildly glare fierce fiendish eyes,
And flash the knives of slaughter, till with shrieks
I break my troubled slumbers. Oft I see
My mother's spirit bending o'er my couch,
All palely beautiful in light, and hear
Her mournful voice soft on the evening winds,

That from the forest to my window come.
O, then no more talk thou to me of courts,
For I will make these woods my home for ever.

WULFNOTH.

Thou, Edith, art the daughter of Gunhilda,
Who was the sister of Canute's brave sire :
Meet therefore 'tis thy beauty find that state
So justly to thy noble birthright due,
And shine, protected by a sovereign's power,
The ornament of courts. I have concealed
From Godwin thy descent, lest, knowing well
His lofty thoughts, he might aspire to win
Thee for his bride, and make thy princely claims
The steps to his ambition.

EDITH.

So have I,
Lest it should place me at too great a distance,
And on the blossoms of his tender hopes,
Like winter's lagging frost on early flowers,
Fall blightingly. Ah, pray forgive—in sooth
We love each other dearly, very dearly.

WULFNOTH.

Then doubly needful is it thou shouldst leave
My poor protection,—that so rich a flower
Should be transplanted from this desert soil,
To bloom beneath the sunshine and the care
Of kindred royalty.

EDITH.

Ah ! to be crushed
With every bud of hope by those fierce storms
That beat on dangerous greatness. Dear, my father,
For such art thou to Edith, let me still
Dwell here with thee, till Godwin shall again

Return to cheer us. Think, O think how sad,
How lonely thou wilt be, when we are both
Gone from thee far away. Then banish not
Thy fearful Edith; cast not her, whom thou
Didst from the tempest and the ocean save,
On the wild surge again.

WULFNOTH.

My dearest child,
The lofty rock which I would place thee on
No future storms can shake, for half the realm
Thy royal cousin by his sword hath won.
In justice to thyself I send thee hence,
And well, for thy sake, is my heart content
To endure the heavy sorrow it must feel
When thou departest from me. Some trusty slaves
Will safely guard thee to the Danish court,
And ample proofs have I, which shall convince
Canute of thy descent.—These bear thou with thee.

EDITH.

Whose voice shall soothe thee when I go from hence?
Who tend thy couch, should sickness thee befall,
Or meet thy wishes with that tender care
Thy Edith would have shown? O, I shall weep
Amid the pomp of crowded courts, to think
On my loved father's loneliness and age.—
I cannot, will not leave thee.

WULFNOTH.

Be content.

I am resolved, and to my lot resigned.

EDITH.

If go I must, one joy will yet be mine:
I shall behold my Godwin, and in him
Is centred every blessing earth can yield.

He will act bravely, and make honour proud
To wait upon him. I, by simple art,
Will prove if Love can stern Ambition quell,
And to his bridal car, in flowery bands,
That lion-passion yoke. If not, adieu
To kingly halls. I know my humble course :
Greatness and I shall never meet again.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Grove near the Palace of Canute.*

Enter Elgitha and Waldimar.

ELGITHA.

STILL so desponding, gentle Waldimar ?
Would I had power to win from thee a smile,
To soothe thy wayward spirit into peace,
And o'er thee fling the sunny beams of joy.

WALDIMAR.

No gleam of joy o'er my dark morn of life
Hath ever dawned, no friend have I e'er known,
Or heard the soothing tones of Pity's voice :
I may conceive, though I have never felt,
How sweet such blessings are. But not for me
Is earthly fellowship of mortal man.
I must commune——

[*A pause.*]

ELGITHA.

With whom ? Tell me, I pray.
Dreams Waldimar that in his lofty moods
With bodiless spirits, forms of fire and air,
He holds communion ?

WALDIMAR.

Spirits ? ay, with gods !!
Awful, terrific forms, that make my brain
Seem like the river's dark and eddying whirlpool.
Speak not of spirits.—O, there is no heart,
No kindly heart that for my misery feels;

For none may know its deep and secret cause.—
Speed on the dreadful hour that gives me peace !

ELGITHA.

Thou art, I fear, possessed : some evil spell
Of wizard-craft is on thee. Let me, then,
The blessed Cross upon thy forehead sign,
And drive the foul fiend from thee.

WALDIMAR.

Not for worlds !

I should be torn in fragments, and my limbs
Hurled on the struggling winds ! The mystic name,
Dreadful ! ineffable ! the name that makes
Heaven's everlasting pillars trembling bow ;
His name whose attributes I know not,—yea,
Nor where He dwells, but whom I yet shall meet,
Is on my forehead, and it must not be
Effaced till Death's pale hand shall wash it thence,
In Ister's sacred wave. ⁽⁴⁾

ELGITHA.

Mysterious man,
Wouldst thou become a Christian, and receive
The font's baptismal rites, the peace of Heaven
Would through the storm upon thy soul descend,
And with its sunny glimpses make thee glad.
Turn not away in moody wildness thus :
In sooth, my friendship merits thy good-will.

WALDIMAR.

O, thou art kind and gentle, and thy voice
Comes o'er my spirit, like sweet music heard
Amid a lonely desert ; but for me
Thy pity flows in vain, like a pure stream
Lost in that sun-smote desert's burning sands.

ELGITHA.

Turn from thyself, and look abroad on nature :
Peruse her volume of delightful records,
Unfolding to the eye an endless change
Of beauties ever new.

WALDIMAR.

It may not be.

ELGITHA.

Indeed it may, if thou wilt be advised.
Look on the morn,
When, showering roses bathed in dew, she comes
O'er yonder azure mountains, and uplifts
The veil of night 'neath which the dim earth slept,
That laughs with joy, like a light-hearted child
When by his mother found where he had lain
Concealed in wanton play. Then every grove
And every vale is full of life and music ;
While o'er the corn that bends its wealthy ears
To the soft salutation of the winds,
The lark, amid the gorgeous-coloured clouds,
Her merry carol sings. O, these are sights
And sounds, my gentle Waldimar, might win
Thy heart to peace and joy.

WALDIMAR.

Thou talk'st in vain.

ELGITHA.

Then let the sober night attract thy gaze :
She in her loneliest hours hath melodies
Sweeter than day can boast ; and glory, too,
Glory that shines unperishingly bright,
Excelling all the pomp of courts and kings.
What, though I talk in vain, if thou wouldst cast
Thine eye upon the moon, that vestal queen,

When she doth glass her beauty in the sun,
And bind her brows with light ; then mark the host
Of golden stars, which from the sapphire depths
Of heaven come forth to attend her solemn state,
Lifting thy heart in prayer to Him who showered
Those living splendours o'er eternal space ;
O, HE would teach thee how to wrestle with
The fiend that vexeth thee, and from thy bosom
Cast out the evil one.

WALDIMAR.

Alas ! there is
No beauty in this world for one who waits
The doing of the all-nameless fearful deed !
The groves are decked in flowers, the heavens are bright
With morning dyes, and evening suns go down
In crimson pomp ; but not for me the flowers
Put forth their bloom, or suns arise and set.
My thoughts are not of those delightful scenes
That bless the years of youth. Yet on me shines,
When thou art present, a bright nameless gleam ;—
It is not joy or hope, for they can find
No place in my dark bosom.

ELGITHA.

What hast thou done ?

WALDIMAR.

By Radegast ! not since I saw the light
Have I to any done one evil deed.
O, cast not on my innocence a shade
Of guilt or crime ; or thou, alas ! wilt add
New anguish to my sufferings.

ELGITHA.

I believe thee,
Firmly believe—but—

WALDIMAR.

'Thou canst never know
The awful secret. When the hour arrives
That I shall hence depart ne'er to return,
And soon that hour must come, wilt thou, Elgitha,
Remember me, and pity my sad doom?

ELGITHA.

Remember thee? ay, and with tears bewail
Thy unknown destiny. O Waldimar,
Say, whither goest thou?

WALDIMAR.

Inquire no more.—

A flash darts through my stony heart like lightning.
Can it be love, or something heavenly? Know I not,
But well I know I would not lose this feeling,
This new-born pleasure, to be made a king!
Sweet stranger-guest, thou in my soul dost shine
Like a lone star amid the clouds of night,
And I will keep thee till the destined hour
Of my departure hence. And now I look
On thee again, Elgitha, I perceive
That earth *has* beauty,—beauty e'en for me!
For thou art of this earth, and thou dost feel
Compassion for my sorrows. Fare thee well:
Yet and again I'll see thee ere I go.

ELGITHA.

O, talk not thus——

WALDIMAR.

Thrice beautiful! art thou not some blest vision,
Sent down to guard me from those sights and sounds
That oft my reason mar? When thou art nigh,
No fierce and gloomy shadows round me throng,
Or formless things of horror; while thine eyes

A tender radiance o'er my darkness shed,
Like moonbeams on the wild and stormy sea.
The let me, dear Elgitha, gently press
My lips to thine, since we so soon must part.
I never breathed on lips of woman, save
My lady mother's—(*kisses Elgitha.*) Radegast, and all
Ye gods above! the joys of heaven are in
Thy balmy kiss, and from those lips despair
Might pluck eternal rapture! My dark soul
Is kindled by a strange and sudden fire,
That burns and struggles with the gloom of years,
Like flames amid the heart of some full forest!
But I must quench it, or on me will rush
Madness and demons, hell and all its horrors. [*Exit.*]

ELGITHA.

Alas, that such a noble form should be
By frenzy blighted thus! Mystery and fate
Hang on him, like a cloud which hides the thunder,
Whose secret dwelling may not be approached.
Pity and Friendship, ye have also lit
In my poor heart a never-dying flame,
That will, if he depart, to dust consume me. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the Palace of Canute.*

*Enter Canute, Zandagast, Turkeetul, Rolf Iric, Earls
and Attendants.*

CANUTE.

England, thy nobler provinces are ours,
By treaty fixed and ratified with Edmund.

TURKEETUL.

By right of valour all to thee belong,
All tribes and kingdoms, pryncedoms, powers, and states

Within the borders of this sea-girt land ;
And all, ere long, shall humble homage pay
Before thy footstool.

ZANDAGAST.

By the Velibogc, ⁽⁵⁾

Our gods of brightness, the base craven Saxons,
Of whom a troop will fly before the lance
Of one Slavonian soldier, ⁽⁶⁾ must yield up
All England to thy power. The eagle dwells
In solitude on her storm-shaken rock,
Claiming the full dominion of the skies :
The lion reigns alone, and scorns to share
The desert with the wolf.

CANUTE.

Brave Zandagast,

Renowned Slavonian captain of my guards,
I would not have thee swear by heathen gods.
Thou must forget the customs of the Wends,
Thy native tribes along the Baltic shores,
And be a Christian. When, in merry mood,
Thou lift'st the wine-cup in the hall of shields,
Drink deep to Christ and all the blessed saints : ⁽⁷⁾
So shall thy high deserts fresh honours win.

ZANDAGAST.

Your gods and saints are then, if I deem right,
Boon wassailers, and love the jovial bowl
Which I despise, hating the thief that steals
All I have worthy from me.

CANUTE.

Speak not thou

So misbeseeemingly.

ZANDAGAST.

My lord, the race

From which I sprang, revere, as Christians do,
The all-powerful Deity, whose dwelling is
The temple of the skies : who frowns,—and light
Departeth from the sun : who speaks in wrath,—
And thunders roll throughout immensity :
Who looks abroad,—and, in his awful glance,
Darkness and Night die on their funeral pyre :
Who smiles,—and the glad earth and heaven shine out
In glory measureless : who speaks in love,—
And cloudy mountain, hollow vale, and wood
Drink deep of music, with whose viewless spirit
Ocean, inspired, doth break forth into song.
He delegates the rule of all below
To his celestial offspring, as a king ⁽⁸⁾
Sets o'er his provinces inferior chiefs.
We to these gods, high councillors of splendour, ⁽⁹⁾
Homage, and vows, and sacrifice perform.
Do we not then believe, as thou believ'st,
In one true God, the Eternal King of kings ?

CANUTE.

No ; for ye worship other gods than one.—
My bishop shall instruct thee in these things,
For I would have my Danish subjects Christians. ⁽¹⁰⁾

ZANDAGAST.

Not all the Christian priests that own thy power,
Shall win me to forsake my fathers' gods :
I'll perish first in fire !—(*aside.*) I've yet to learn, ⁽¹¹⁾
My royal master, that thy Danish subjects,
Who have their war-gods changed, have changed them-
selves,
Or mended their old manners. Still they fight,
Not in defence, but for unbounded power,
And the Vikings' bloody craft pursue,

Plundering on sea and land, while fell Revenge
Crimsons their knives as deeply as of old.
At their proud banquets, night and day they spend
In such debauching riot, as exceeds
All I in heathendom have yet beheld.
Nor are these Saxons, who so long have borne
The Christian name, for better deeds approved :
But much I marvel pious bishops should
Make nobles drunk, to cheat them of their wealth,
Whereby t' enrich themselves. (12)

CANUTE.

I must confess
Their deeds too oft disgrace the name they bear ;
But still the faith is pure, howe'er so ill
The practice of its followers.

ZANDAGAST.

Stranger still !
A tree so goodly, bitter fruits produce ?
A fount so pure, such turbid waters yield ?

Enter Officer.

OFFICER.

Duke Edric waits without to see your Grace,
And bids me say, he brings important news
To be in secret told.

CANUTE.

My Earls, withdraw.

[Exeunt Chiefs, &c.]

What tidings hither brings this Mercian Duke ?
I know him for a villain ; but while he
To my ambition ministers, I must
With honours gild his baseness. Kings may love
Treason to foes : but hate, and watchful fear,

And keen suspicion dog the traitor's heels,
While o'er his head the sword of justice hangs
By a frail hair suspended.—But he comes.

Enter Edric.

Now, Edric, speak thy message.

EDRIC—(*kneeling.*)

Hail, Canute !

Thrice hail to him who o'er all England reigns !

CANUTE.

Ha ! glorious news ! But Edmund, what of him ?

EDRIC.

He is, my lord, as thou wouldst have him be,—
A lifeless piece of clay. ⁽¹³⁾

CANUTE.

Relate, good Edric,

The manner of his death.

EDRIC.

Seek not to know

More than I tell thee.—I beheld his blood
Red on the trusty blades of those who did
Their office faithfully. The nobles all
Of Edmund's faction now are turned to thee,
And every Saxon owns thy sovereign power.

CANUTE.

Then am I king indeed ! and on my brows
The crowns of England and of Denmark rest,
While Norway soon——Scant shall not, Edric, be
Thy guerdon for such service. Other deeds
Must yet be done. Thy axe the royal tree,
Sprung from the ancient root of Cerdic's line,
Hath felled to earth ; but from it freshly springs
Some cherished saplings, which, if not destroyed,

May grow to dangerous height. Edward and Edmund,
Sons of King Ethelred, I have them safe,
And they must be——

EDRIC.

Might I advise, my lord,
Those princely youths from England should be sent,
To some far-distant land. It would be lack
Of policy and king-craft now, when all
The Saxons feel inclined to own thy sway
From love, or fear, or interest, by the death
Of these fair Æthelings to estrange their hearts,
And thy strong fabric of dominion, reared
With so much toil, and with the noblest blood
Of Englishmen and Danes cemented, shake
To its deep-laid foundations.—No, my liege,
Hence on a visit send them.

CANUTE.

Ay, from which,
My worthy Edric, they may ne'er return.
It shall be so.—I will to Sweden's King
Despatch them straight, with secret charge that he
Rid me for ever of the dangerous brats.

EDRIC.

No fear they will return, to breathe again
The balmy air of England.

CANUTE.

Call the chiefs,
That I may each appoint to his command
O'er the great provinces of my new kingdom.

EDRIC—(*aside.*)

For this my last bold deed, no doubt mankind
Will on me heap all vile opprobrious terms
That baseness ever bore. And what reck I,

So that my titles, wealth, and power remain?
Censure and praise, brief shadows of an hour,
Ay, and hereafter obloquy and fame,
Although less fleeting, less substantial far,
Are equally my scorn.

[*Exit.*

CANUTE.

By my war-bracelet ! I protest my heart
Goes not with these dark doings ; ⁽¹⁴⁾ but my state,
My crown, my empire, all compel against
My better feelings. As I hope for heaven,
Hereafter deeds shall for this blood atone ;
And I will to all future ages leave
Memorials worthy of immortal Fame,
Who o'er them shall her golden sceptre wave,
Though the cold atoms which compose this form
Sleep where no mortal knows.

Enter Zandagast, Edric, Turkeetul, Rolf-Iric, and Earls.

ZANDAGAST.

My sovereign lord, we thy commands await.

CANUTE.

Chieftains of England and of Denmark, learn
That Edmund is no more. His death makes void
The contract which divided England's crown,
And robbed it of its lustre. On our brows
That symbol now in full refulgence shines,
And we will wear it bravely. Gentle Earls,
To each, as doth his several merit claim,
We give high rule and power subordinate
O'er England's provinces. Thou, Edric, still
Shalt be the Duke of Mercia ; thou, Turkeetul,
East-Anglia govern ; and Northumberland,
Norwegian Iric of the magic sword,

Be thy domains.—The south ourselves will hold
In full immediacy.

EDRIC—(*kneeling with the Earls.*)

We all do swear
Allegiance, as true vassals, to thy throne.

CANUTE.

And now, brave chieftains, as ye tender well
The weal and happiness of a great people
Committed to your charge, as ye respect
My favour and support, as ye would reap
That proud reward of valour ye have sown
In the red fields of war, and keep unstained
Your noble honour, without which a prince
Is baser than the basest predial slave,
Let perfect equity to Dane and Saxon
Guide every action. When ye judgment give,
Beware the scales of even-handed justice
Swerve not the turning of a grain of dust
For love of sordid lucre, friend, or kin,
Or brief will be your power. Briton and Dane,
Angle and Saxon, are my subjects all,
And equally will I their rights maintain :
So farewell, lords, till we at banquet meet.
I've counsel, Mercia, for thy private ear.

[*Exeunt Canute and Edric.*]

ZANDAGAST—(*aside.*)

There go two Christians ! One—and well 'tis known—
A greater miscreant never curst the earth :
The other—but no matter. Edmund dead !
I doubt he came most foully by his death.
That treacherous, base blood-shedder——

ROLF IRIC—(*to Turkeetul.*)

How died Edmund ?
His death is strangely sudden.

ZANDAGAST.

Ask Duke Edric.

TURKEETUL.

It matters not, Lord of Northumberland,
How strange or sudden. From its suddenness
We pluck our greatest comfort for his loss,
Since by his death we two fair Dukedoms gain.

ZANDAGAST.

Mean selfishness ! Is it no matter, when
A brave man falls, how by his end he came ?
The field of glory should *his* death-bed be,
His winding-sheet the banner, dipt in blood,
Which o'er him waved as he to victory rushed.
The poisoned cup, the assassin's hidden steel,
Are only meet for cowards.

TURKEETUL.

I, for one,

Have no weak curiosity to hunt
Out dangerous secrets. If there aught be wrong,
The English faction may, when they have power,
Correct what is amiss. But come, my lords,
It well behoves us merrily to quaff
And feast, with song and harp, from morn to night,
From night to morn again, like jovial sons
Of conquering Denmark : 'tis an honour due
To both our own advancement and the King's.
Come, thou wilt join us o'er the wassail bowl,
Brave captain ?—Nay, for once be social, man.

ZANDAGAST.

That means—come, be a drunkard. Drunkenness
Is one of your great Christian virtues : I
Have never known a noble deed yet done

In one of its mad moods ; but who may count
Its dark and evil things ?

TURKEETUL.

O dull of soul !

'Tis only when bright, generous wine inspires
The heart of man, that all his better powers
Expand to full perfection. Selfish thoughts
Are lost in friendship, and life's vexing cares
Drowned in unmeasured joy. O, such bright hours
Are worth an age of dull and sober time ;
Who would not bid them welcome ? Mighty wine !
Thou canst, like love, make all things lovely seem,
And add to love itself a tenfold bliss :
Canst make the very miser dip his hand
In his close purse, and scatter blessings round him :
Turn cowardice to valour ; give to silence
Music and eloquence ; and, like the sun,
Arouse man's torpid nature into action,
Warming the wintry sleeper to new life.
Glorious, but brief, thy summer-time of mirth,
Too happy long too last ; yet, ere it flies,
Man feels himself a god !

ZANDAGAST.

Yet this same wine

His godship soon transforms into a devil.
And then comes double sight, and double speech,
With maudlin folly of vain-glorious tongues ;
Then noisy riot, brawls, and maddening strife,
And blows and wounds,—till dearest friends become
The bitterest foes, till murder dyes the cups
With deeper purple from the gushing veins
Of the fierce revellers, who to and fro
Stagger, as if their feet on earthquakes trod ;

Then, of all reason, speech, and motion reft,
Sink prostrate on the ground, the laugh of fools.
No grovelling beast, my gallant lord, is half
So brutish as thy wine-created god.

ROLF IRIC.

Ye both are right ; and where meet your extremes,
Is found man's brightest joy. It is a flower,
A sweet enchanted flower, that blooms immortal
In Odin's paradise, but fades on earth,
Fades in the very plucking.

ZANDAGAST.

Ay, and turns
To the most noxious weed, that soon destroys
The infatuated gatherer.

TURKEETUL.

Be it so,
I'll not refrain ; for, like all earthly bliss,
It hath its price, which I pay willingly.
I know no mortal joy has fewer cares
To mar its sweetness.

ZANDAGAST.

Yes, sobriety.

TURKEETUL.

Call you sobriety a joy ?

ZANDAGAST.

I do ;
Which never makes a fool of its possessor,
Or raises on his honest cheek a blush.
The joy of wine is but the joy of madness,
A frenzy, which lets all the passions loose
To make us slaves and idiots.

TURKEETUL.

'Tis a joy

I doubt thou ne'er hast felt, or hast no taste,
Brave Zandagast, to feel ; and thus, like men
Who have not certain passions, thou dost rail
Loudly at those that have. It is, I deem,
A brave defect, if a defect it be,
And well becomes a soldier.

ZANDAGAST.

Ah ! my lord,
How tenderly man blames his own misdeeds,
Slight counting them, though deemed by others vile ;
And still from circumstance, and time, and place
He gathers fair excuse, till to himself
He faultless seems, whate'er may be his actions.
Adieu, my lords, and merry be your revels.

[*Exit.*

TURKEETUL.

A valiant, honourable heathen ; yet
He scorns a cup, the soldiers blithest cheer.
Better would he a bishopric become
Than half the Saxon beadsmen, were his creed
Of their complexion.

ROLF IRIC.

By my spell-forged sword !
These bishops are no fools, my lord of Anglia :
They, as occasion needs, the cross or brand
Can wield with equal force ; and at the banquet
No Danish soldier, in his merriest hour,
Ere lifted wine-cup with a freer hand
Than these ascetic priests.

TURKEETUL.

Then do they set
An excellent example. I will choose
For my confessor one that, like myself,

Permits not the full bowl to go its rounds
Unquaffed. Light shall my penance be with him.
I never yet knew one that did not love
A gay carouse, but was a sullen wight,
Morose and proud, with failings dark and many
Hid 'neath a veil of owl-like gravity.
But we lose time, that should be better spent
Than in this idle talk. When morning comes,
It still shall find us, Iric, jovial watchers.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Hall in the House of Zandagast.*

Enter Ermingild and Waldimar.

ERMINGILD.

My son, revered and honoured as a god
Among our Wendic tribes, why hangs a more
Than wonted gloom on that pale brow of thine?
And why those deep-drawn sighs?

WALDIMAR.

I wot not, madam,
Save 'tis the knowledge that the time draws nigh,
When I must bid farewell to all which now
Seems bright and beautiful beneath the moon.
And yet am I impatient for the hour:
The worst to learn, were better than this state
Of dark uncertainty and fearful doubt.

ERMINGILD.

Thou know'st, my son——

WALDIMAR.

Ay, know I e'en full well
That thou from infancy hast on my mind
Deeply impressed my doom. Ere we forsook

Our native land to follow Denmark's King,
The fatal sign was fixt upon my brow;
And wheresoe'er I moved, respect and awe
From the Slavonians met me, as if I
Were the strange offspring of some fearful god,
A being nor of earth, or heaven, or hell,
Till from my very self I shrunk in dread,
And wished the hour were come.

ERMINGILD.

To-morrow, then,
At night's dark noon, that destined hour arrives
When thou, my noble son, shalt be received
Among the gods—thyself a god! and find
In brighter worlds, above the strife and coil
Of human passions, thine eternal home.

WALDIMAR.

Ah! this hath been a dreary world to me,
In which, from childhood, I have never known
Kind fellowship, or sympathy, or love:
If other worlds hereafter I may find,
Darker they cannot be.

ERMINGILD.

O, thou wilt float
On the resplendent meteor, and thy steed
Shall be the rainbow of the summer skies,
Chasing the shower o'er climes where ever bloom
Roses of damask hue. Then shalt thou dwell
In those refulgent palace-halls, that burn
With sunlit gems, and gold, and diamond fires
Amid the western heavens at eve-tide hour;
And in those cloud-isles wander where the groves,
All blent with ruby dome and gate of pearl,
Their emerald light o'er flowers immortal shed,

And bathe in crystal waters, breathing music
Along their golden shores.

WALDIMAR.

And shall I dwell,
When he, the dread Destroyer, calls me hence,
In regions such as these ?

ERMINGILD.

Ay, verily ;
And with the warrior-spirits of the slain
Companionship and lofty converse hold,
Where the proud Genii of the northern star
Spread their pavilion, and where gorgeous pomp
Illumines earth and heaven. Thy mother oft
Will from her bower look forth on those bright skies
Thy form to mark, in glittering mail yclad.

WALDIMAR.

The warrior's guise, his glory, and his sword
Are not for me. I own this heart hath felt,
When I have heard the stormy trumpet fling
Its brazen clamour on the winds, a wish
That I had been a soldier ; but ere long
Such thoughts have died amid my bosom's gloom,
Like sun-gleams on the darkly-rolling sea,
When swift the storm-cloud comes.

ERMINGILD.

What though, my son,
No battle-garland decks thy sacred brows,
Thou wilt become a spirit great in power.
Oft shall I list to hear thy deep-toned voice
Amid the cloud-borne thunders, as thou rid'st
On thy white giant steed, with vesture dipt
In blood-red glory, while the nations quake
With sad foreboding fear as they behold

Thy going forth to war. Then wilt thou bless
Thy mother for her vow, that made thee great
Among the gods on high.

WALDIMAR.

Ah me, alas !

Your visions, O how different all to mine,
That still are wildly fearful ! Oft have I
On the Wenedic sea's surge-smitten shore,
Shunning and shunned by man, gone forth to meet
At midnight hour the coming of the tempest.
There on the rocks I've laid me down to list
The thunder's voice, the cataract-sounding roar
Of the mad ocean, mingled with the shrieks
Of drowning mariner. And then, methought,
Strange mutterings came between the weary winds
That sunk o'erspent with rage, while ghastly forms,
Unlike aught human, glared with eyes of flame
Upon me through the gloom, and seemed to say—
“Come, thou devoted one, amid the surge
Plunge deep at once ; and, freed from this dull clay,
Be e'en as we are. Our unknown abodes,
Hid in the elements of flood and fire
Amid the burning centre of the globe,
Wait to receive thee, where the earthquake dwells,
And the red lightning in its naked essence
Lives with Eternity.” Then did I shriek
With cold and thrilling horror, for I felt
The god, whose name is written on my brow,
Clasp in his giant arms my quivering form :
His breath came like a furnace seven times heated,
And o'er me waved his awful-sounding wings,
That darkened sea and land with tenfold night !

ERMINGILD.

’Twas but the brain-born spectre of some dream.

WALDIMAR.

No, 'twas reality; for laughed so loud
The shadowy demon, that the thunder paused
To listen, and the wild sea held its peace,
Silenced by fear. Ten thousand meteors shook
He from his cloud-broad plumes, that swept the heavens,
'Till ocean, towering cliff, and shore shone out
All bright and clear, as though the morn had woke
With sudden wonder:—Darkness rose and fled.
Then such a form unutterable I saw
Above me hovering, that my spirit died
With agonizing dread! When I revived,
Night stood with me alone.

ERMINGILD.

Ah, my loved child,
Such thoughts and visions will be oft with those
Who are the called and chosen of the gods.

WALDIMAR.

Nay, gentle mother, am I not devoted
To Czerneboch, the Black and Evil One,
King of the land of Darkness? ⁽¹⁵⁾ Or why thus
Am I so haunted with strange shapes and things
Of hideous aspect, that by mortal tongue
May never be revealed.

ERMINGILD.

No, no, sweet boy :
It is wild fear that on thy dreamy mind
Such dark illusion flings. Ere Zandagast,
Thy father, followed Swëin to this isle,
He was in battle wounded nigh to death.
Then did I vow to SIVA, the CREATOR,
PRESERVER, and DESTROYER,—attributes
In ONE OMNIPOTENT,—the Lord of lords,

If he thy father's days prolonged, and thou,
Unborn, a boy shouldst prove, I would to him
Thy life devote; and when revolving suns
Brought in their radiant course the destined hour,
Thou, to the death-song of our priests, shouldst cast
Thyself from Siva's rock amid the waves
Of the deep-rolling Ister. ⁽¹⁶⁾

WALDIMAR.

Thus have I been,
Since first I saw the light of heaven, cut off
From those emotions other mortals feel ;
And all that is to them on this fair earth
Pleasing and bright, have not a charm for me.
I stand alone amid a busy world,
Unmoved by all its passions, like a rock
Barren and shunned, around whose rugged sides
The foamy sea-wave breaks, and then retires.
Yet, good my mother, ever do I feel,
When sweet Elgitha kindly on me smiles,
A mournful joy mount to my burning cheek,
As steals the crimson rose's lovely hue
O'er dying twilight's paleness.

ERMINGILD.

Ah, my son !

Elgitha is a Christian. Thou no more
That witching maid must see.

WALDIMAR.

O mother ! mother !

Be not so cruel to thine only child.
Since I so soon must pass away, and fade
From all remembrance, let me yet behold
Her heavenly face till the dark billows close
Above my head, and thy chief god receive me.

O, let her star-bright eye shine o'er the eve
Of my departure hence, and thy poor boy
Shall feel—what his lone heart ne'er felt before—
A parting gleam of gladness, cold, yet bright
As the last glimpses of the winter sun.

ERMINGILD.

'Tis as I feared. This maid in his dark bosom
Hath lit love's flame, which faintly burneth, like
A dim lamp in the tomb. O Waldimar !
Thou hast not to this Saxon girl betrayed
The secret of thy doom ? Canute's fierce wrath—
Misery and want—the curses of the gods
For broken vows—all, all will on us light,
If it be known—prevented——

WALDIMAR.

Fear not, mother ;

The secret I have kept, and will thy vow
Most faithfully perform.

Enter Zandagast.

ZANDAGAST.

My Waldimar,
My only one, my first-born, could thine arm
Wield this good sword, couldst thou to distant years
Prolong our warlike line——But to the gods'
Superior claim resigned, I yield thee up.
Art thou prepared thy mother's solemn oath
Manfully to fulfil ? ⁽¹⁷⁾

WALDIMAR.

I am, my father.

ZANDAGAST.

Are all things ready for this awful deed,
Which must be done in secret ?

ERMINGILD.

All, my lord.

To-morrow, when shall rise May-Evening's star,
The sun-rites of the ancient heathen dwellers
Who once this isle possessed, will be performed
By Saxon Christians. High on cairn, and rock,
And mountain-steep will blaze a thousand fires;
And round the May-pole, with its flower-sheaves crowned,
Maidens and youths will dance in frolic glee, ⁽¹⁸⁾
Beneath the midnight stars.

ZANDAGAST.

But what have they

To do with Waldimar?

ERMINGILD.

Attend my words.

Nothing have they; yet through the land will ring
Loud joy and merriment, and all the sky
Will shine with lights,—an honour meetly due
To Waldimar's translation. On that night,
As our good priests affirm who with us dwell,
The dead will from their graves, where they have lain
Unnumbered ages, rise, and flock to meet
The mighty gods of air, and flood, and fire,
With goblins grim, and dwarfs, and fairy sprites,
And giant demons of lone fen and moor,
High festival to hold on Vadha's rock,
In Rimmon's gloomy woods. ⁽¹⁹⁾ From distant lands
Will gather there those prophet hags, who with
The blood of infants newly slain consult
The Immortal Ones, and o'er the earth have power
To cast the dread enchantment and the spell
Which to their will resistless all things bind.
Thither our priests shall at the midnight hour

Conduct thee, Waldimar; and from that rock,
Thou to the eddy flood beneath shalt leap,
And so for aye be blest.

ZANDAGAST.

And must he join
That wild and fearful throng? I, who would stand
Unshrinking in the battle-front, and brave
Singly a host in arms, feel every nerve
All tremulous to hear thee name this meeting.

WALDIMAR.

I heed not that, for I have ever loved
The wilderness, lonely and dark, to haunt;
Where in its solitudes all-nameless things,
And creatures not of earth, I've oft times met,
And held communings with them.

ZANDAGAST.

By my sword,
Thou wouldst have made a soldier, truly, boy,
A gallant soldier!—but it may not be.
'Tis well the time is short, for England's King
Expects that we our ancient faith should change,
And soon will send his priests to teach us——

ERMINGILD.

What?

ZANDAGAST.

Their mystic creed.

ERMINGILD.

I'll perish ere I'll learn,
Or worship their strange gods.

ZANDAGAST.

And so will I.
He who forsakes the faith of his forefathers,
From fear or interest, is the worst of traitors.

[*Exeunt Zandagast and Ermingild.*]

WALDIMAR.

Would I had never seen thee, dear Elgitha;
For tenfold horror now broods on my soul,
As swiftly comes the time of self-destruction.
Life! O for life but one short month t' enjoy
Love's unknown heaven in my Elgitha's arms!
Then would those sufferings I've so long endured
Be more than recompensed.—
But no—my fate is fixt. Farewell to earth,
Now in its morn of beauty dawning on me!
What will the next state be? Darkness and clouds
Rest on it; yet I faintly through the gloom
Terrific forms discern, and lakes of fire
Which heave and chafe against a shore that glows
Like molten iron; then in deeper night
Fade, like the last red gleam i' th' dusky sky.
Let come what will, can I know greater misery?
Adieu, Elgitha, thou mild beam of heaven!
Soon must we part for ever! Life's weary day
Of tempest and of gloom is near its close;
And to that sun-light I must bid farewell,
Which from the storms hath broken forth so brightly
On my last evening hour,—then haste to sink,
Sink broken-hearted, in eternal night.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Palace.*

Enter Canute and Edric.

CANUTE.

THE sons of Ethelred are on the deep
That bears them far away to Swedish shores.
Their names will in the chronicle of kings
Be never entered: History shall forget them,
As though they ne'er had been.—

But think'st thou, Edric,
That Athelburg will take a faithful charge
Of Edwin, who too nearly stands beside
Our English throne? on whom the people look—
I mean the Saxon rabble—with such love
And worship that 'tis said he hath acquired
The ambiguous title of the King of Peasants.

EDRIC.

The sole remaining leaf is that, my lord,
Of England's regal tree, whose trunk is dry,
Whose branches all are smitten by the flash
Of thy death-dealing sword. Soon will the winds
Of autumn dash that trembling leaf to earth,
And never shall its parent root put forth
A summer bud again.

CANUTE.

O, how I feel
My eagle-spirit burn to soar above

The poor ambition of those northern kings,
Whose highest fame is plunder and destruction.
I would be great—ay, truly, nobly great !
And though my rising be o'ercast and dimmed
With lurid clouds of blood, shine forth I shall
In all those princely virtues which make kings
The representatives of God on earth ;
And ere I set, the glory of my reign
In blessings shall outspread o'er many nations.

EDRIC—(*aside.*)

This King, with all his power, is but a fool !
Make others blest ! Let me be blest myself,
And I reck not on whom misfortune lights.
He that on man showers benefits, doth cast
Seed on a naked rock, or in a soil
Where nothing springs but rank ingratitude.

Enter Ulfmando, and Godwin in a rich habit.

CANUTE.

Ha ! art thou not the shadow of thyself
Risen from the grave, my brother ? Mortal still
I feel thou art. A thousand welcomes home !
We deemed thee on our day of victory fallen :
What caused so long thine absence ?

ULFMANDO.

I was lost,
The foe pursuing in dim Selwood's forest ;
From whence I had not 'scaped this tale to tell,
But for a faithful friend.

CANUTE.

That friend shall find
In us a friend ; and if his fortunes need

The fostering hand of power, beneath our smiles
They shall grow up to greatness.

ULFMANDO.

Good my lord,
Behold the youth whose worthiness and faith
Claim lasting gratitude. He will deserve,
I'll answer with my life, thy royal favour.

CANUTE.

A goodly form,—and on that brow is stamped
A lofty nobleness, which speaks him born
To noble deeds. Thou shalt have place, and rank,
And honours at our court. What is thy name?

GODWIN.

Godwin, my royal lord.

EDRIC—(*aside, and starting.*)

There is the sound
Of other years in those familiar tones.

CANUTE.

Kneel,—and henceforth be thou Earl Godwin styled.

GODWIN—(*aside.*)

Earl Godwin! Bliss and heaven are in that title.
O, brave prophetic witch! The rest shall follow.
A swineherd yesterday, and now an Earl!
My senses are bewildered. Bold Ambition,
Aid me this greatness gallantly to bear
As if to honours born, nor let me pall
In presence of these proud ones.

CANUTE.

If thou love
The warrior's high renown, thou shalt ere long
Means and occasion find, whereby to win
That glory which shall make our gifts seem poor

As scanty rivers, when they tribute yield
To the wide and wealthy ocean.

GODWIN.

O, for the glory of a wide renown
My soul hath thirsted, like the panting hart
For the cool fountain-wave in desert lands.
My father was a warrior-chief; but I,
A wild boy of the forest, lack the skill
To handle shield and lance; yet let the sword
Of chivalry be mine, and sound the trump,
I will do battle for the wreath of fame,
And bravely fall; or, braver still, redeem
The pledge which thou hast ventured for my honour
In thy ennobling gifts.

EDRIC—(*aside.*)

The very echo of my brother's voice!
His face the image, too,—

ULFMANDO.

'Then since thou hast
To my deliverer shown such grace, my lord,
I will, in token of my grateful love,
'To him my gentle sister give in marriage,
So your renowned Highness yield consent.

CANUTE.

My leave thou freely hast.

EDRIC—(*aside.*)

All plagues consume him!
Who is this forest upstart? and from whence
Doth he, proud peasant, come to blast my sight?
An earldom, and a bride of princely rank,
Won in so brief a space by goodly looks
And vaunting words, that cost him nought save breath!
He deals with hell and devils! Is he not

That hated brother's son? Ere long will I
My dark suspicions or confirm or end:
Let them be true or false, no rest for me
Till this new favourite of the court I've crushed. [*Exit.*

ULFMANDO.

And wherefore is Earl Godwin thoughtful grown?
Comes joy not with thine honours?

GODWIN.

Ha! *Earl* Godwin?

Why dost thou mock me?—Pardon, good my lord,
I did forget myself. Earl Godwin! O,
Could but my father hear that blissful sound,
And gentle Edith,—how their hearts would leap
With joy to hail my glory! Ah! sweet maid,
Thou of my lofty greatness oft mayst hear,
But not behold,—for meet we must no more!
My soul is in a whirlwind tossed and torn
With fiercely struggling passions. [*Aside.*

ULFMANDO.

Art thou sad

To hear me name my sister for thy spouse?
Though she hath beauty, and an ample dower
Might claim a princely bridegroom, yet if thou
The pledge of my full gratitude decline,
Still I must be thy friend.

GODWIN.

Decline, my lord?

Should I refuse and scorn a gift so bright,
I were more fit to be a slave, than stand
Honoured in Honour's presence. No, my lords,
I'll never prove ungrateful. Why, by Heaven,
Greatness, which should ennoble, makes me base,
Ay, a base lying villain! for to Edith

I must ungrateful, false, and perjured prove,
Or blast the golden promise of my hopes.
Love and Ambition for the mastery strive,
Like seas that meet in thunder. O, I feel
Something like madness here !

[*Aside.*

CANUTE.

Go, and behold
The fair Celtina. By my shield and bracelet,
To see her is to love. We will become
A suitor in thy cause, for thou hast saved
The husband of our sister, and we count
No gift too great for service such as thine.

[*Exeunt Canute and Ulfmando.*

GODWIN.

The die is cast.—Love, thou must yield the throne
To thy more powerful rival. Yet will I
A brother's tenderness for Edith cherish.
Soft ! there's another path, a primrose path
For me to tread, that leads to perfect bliss.
Edith shall be my mistress. I will have
No sighs, or tears, or broken hearts, to mar
The joys of rank and grandeur. Thou, Ambition,
Shalt seat me high in power, and laughing Love
This brow engarland with his brightest roses.
I, at one leap, have cleared the wide-stretched gulph
Where the dead-sea of dark oblivion rolls ;
And now I stand upon a sunlit steep,
With Honour by my side. O, how my heart
Burned with despite and envy to behold
The mighty and the noble,—not from hate
To rank and titles, but that I was doomed
To be a thing for their contempt or pity.
If kind they seemed, the manner of their kindness

To me was bitter insult ; when they smiled
In condescension, O, I writhed as if
A gilded serpent stung me, for I felt
My soaring spirit brave and proud as theirs :
But when their scorn fell on me, by yon heaven,
That came like molten lead poured on my brain,
And I with rage would weep because they stood,
Like towering cliffs above the dashing surge,
Too high for my revenge. Now I'm their equal :
And let them taunt my birth, and they shall find,
If I have not the kingly lion's lineage,
I have at least his courage.

Enter Edric.

EDRIC.

So, brave my springal Earl, thy lucky stars
Have lifted thee to courts, where thou hast found
In the King's presence favour.

GODWIN.

By St. Brice,
Thou speakest somewhat scoffingly, I trow.
But let it pass awhile.

EDRIC.

'Twere better thou
Shouldst never name that Saint in Danish courts.
Reverence for her will mar thy fortunes here.
There's counsel for thee. Take it as 'tis given.

GODWIN.

I will,—and that is with no slight contempt.
Thou art a courtier ; yet I trust the King
Hath gifts so rich and many to bestow
On whom he lists, that what has fallen on me
Can give thy heart no pang.

EDRIC.

My heart a pang?
Thou know'st me not. Yet may I marvel much
His gifts should be so great to one so young,
A stranger to himself and all the pomp
That waits on high-born nobles.

GODWIN.

This is envy.
Ay, there was truth in what my father told
Of courts and palaces—(*aside.*) Is it, my lord,
So wondrous, then, that princes should feel grateful
For service done them in their utmost need,
And due reward bestow?

EDRIC.

Thy words betray
Thine ignorance of the world. Where wast thou born?

GODWIN.

What's that to thee? It matters little where
I was brought forth, or who my parents are,
Since born I am,—born to a lofty state,
A proud inheritance; and I'll maintain
With my good sword the honours I have gained,
Against the mightiest lord that dares insult me.

EDRIC.

If they will condescend so far to grace
Thy new nobility; if not—

GODWIN.

Why then
I'll taunt them in the court—ay, in the presence,
As base unmanly dastards. I will teach
The vilest slaves to hoot them for rank cowards.
My *new* nobility! How old is thine?
And whence comes your patrician birth, of which

Ye vaunt so proudly ? Fools ! know ye right well
The stock from whence your ancient lineage sprang ?
Did Heaven the earliest founders of your race
Create superior beings ? No ; if back
Ye trace your generations, ye shall find
There was a time, conceal it as ye may,
When your forefathers were of vulgar birth,—
Soldiers and robbers, who by battle-craft,
By lawless plunder, and dark deeds of blood
Won their distinction. And the days will come,
When those proud titles ye now wear shall be
The birthright of some beggar's distant issue ;
While your descendants, lost amid the herd
Of crouching slaves, toil for their daily bread,
Even on the very lands their haughty sires
Held in dominion. Though *my* father were
The meanest serf that tilled the stubborn glebe,
My spirit—and 'tis mind, ay, mind alone
Which man exalts above his fellow men—
Would be as noble as the proudest chief's
Who counts in his long line a thousand Earls !

EDRIC—(*aside.*)

His lofty thoughts confirm my strong suspicions.

GODWIN.

What though the honours which my service won,
And honestly, have been but newly sown
On a wild uncultured soil, they shall spring up
And flourish proudly, yielding in due time
A golden harvest of immortal fame.

EDRIC.

Immortal fame on earth ? The earth forbids it,
For daily she to dissolution tends : ⁽²⁰⁾
And when shall come her doom, as soon it must,

Where will be then thine everlasting fame ?
Delusion of mad fools ! and therefore I
Laugh such vain hopes to scorn, while all my care
Is for the enjoyment of that narrow space
Which man's few days inherit.

GODWIN.

Soulless sage !

Barren of all that's truly great and brave !
Thy poor nobility hangs on thy back
In costly trappings. Strip thee of thy robes,
And the foul beggar is at least thine equal.

EDRIC.

Why, saucy forest-groom, and dost thou know
Who stands before thee ?

GODWIN.

No, not I ; and care,
By Heaven, as little.

EDRIC.

Thou unmannered serf,
I am the Duke of Mercia.

GODWIN.

Then indeed

I know thee well, and cry thy mercy, Duke,
For likening thee to a poor scurvy beggar ;
Yet to the houseless beggar have I done
By far the greater wrong.—
For not the basest, bloodiest, ditch-dog thief
That nightly steals to feed his famished maw,
And ruthless murders doth for guilty hire,
Is half so vile as thou art ! On thy head
Thy country's deep and deadly curses rest :
They, like eternal fire, shall to thee cling,
And in thy passion-quivering heart Remorse

Crimson her vulture-beak. Living shalt thou
Be as the damned ; and dead, be living still
In utter darkness, anguish, and despair !

EDRIC.

Hence, foul-tongued ruffian ! herd thee with the wolf
And forest bear, thy old and meet compeers.
Thou seed of vipers,
That crawling from thy slime into the sun
Of courtly favour, by its warmth art swelled
To serpent growth ; but I, of noble blood,
Despise thy venomed fangs.

GODWIN.

Seed of a peasant,
First-born of forest serfs and lackland slaves,
Talk'st *thou* of noble blood ?
I know thy birth, thou honourable miscreant !
By every crime that yet hath found a name
Hast thou to greatness risen. Thou a Duke ?
A slave ! the vilest slave that ever stretched
His houseless, leprous carcass on a dunghill !
Go hang thyself ! thou art too base to die
By any brave man's sword. By Heaven, thy blood
Would e'en disgrace the knife of an assassin.

EDRIC.

What is it makes me to this upstart cower ?
He deals with fiends, and casts enchantment on me.

[*Aside.*

Know'st thou the law for him who dares defame ?

GODWIN.

What reck I of the law, now made an Earl ?
I am above the law, like other courtiers.

EDRIC.

I'll have thy tongue cut out. Such is the law

For false and slanderous railers. ⁽²¹⁾

GODWIN.

Slander thee?

That were impossible : thy deeds outgo
The blackest accusations. Gentle Duke,
The Devil is no match for thee in fame ;
And, spite of thy contempt for man's opinion,
Disgrace shall with thee dwell throughout all time,
And on thy grave the curse of ages fall.

EDRIC.

Thy ignorance, like thy malice, moves my laughter.
Think'st thou the dead man's bones, that rotting lie
In some time-ruined charnel, weed-o'ergrown,
Can aught of pleasure, aught of sorrow feel,
That, for the good or evil he hath done
A thousand years gone by, earth's crawling worms
Deem him a saint or fiend?

GODWIN.

Thou surely art
Some pestilent fiend embodied in that shape,
Haunting the earth to curse it. Man or fiend,
I'll wrestle with thee till I drive thee hence.
Where is thy brother, thou dark homicide?

EDRIC.

Where I will send *thee* shortly,—in deep hell !
Unless his troubled spirit walk the earth,
Seeking revenge in thy detested form.

GODWIN.

I am the spirit of revenge, sent forth
In storm and whirlwind by my injured country ;
And I, ere long, will blood for blood demand,
And rid the world of thee, its vilest curse ! [Exit.

EDRIC.

Whence comes this bold mysterious being?—Pshaw !
It is the son of Wulfnoth, whose cold bones
Sleep in the sea-caves of the southern coast.
Deep hate I know pursues me for my deeds ;
Nor from them can I gather self-respect,
Or days of joy, or nights of sweet repose.
Yet power is mine, and I from that do pluck
A balm for every wound, a richer wreath
Than a good name bestows,—the pride of fools.
And must I crouch,
When flourish green and proudly all my honours,
Crouch to this slave? Eternal shame were mine
If I in combat met him, for he wears
The spells of sorcery, and hath to the Devil
Bartered his soul for wealth and rank. The court
Long cannot hold us both. Must I give place
And power to him? Fury and plagues ! If gold
Can purchase steel or poison, he shall find,
So generous am I, that my purse for him
Whom most I hate, the noblest largess yields. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A Room of State in the Palace.**Enter Edith and Evora.*

EVORA.

O, this is glorious ! Who would wish to live
In Selwood's lonesome forest ?

EDITH.

Sooner far
I in its happy solitudes would dwell,
Than in these noisy halls of wine and riot.

EVORA.

O, patience bless me ! our companions there
Were chattering pies, and cawing rooks, and wolves,
And shag-browed clowns, from whose lips never dropped
A well-turned compliment to female beauty.
Here, even the knaves are dressed and talk like lords,
Are so polite, so witty, and so gay,
Yea, all a damsel loves. O, 'tis a heaven
To live at court ! Thrice-blessed day for me
When you, dear lady, took me from the woods
To be your humble handmaid.

EDITH.

Take good heed.

False-heartedness dwells here too well know I,
To my deep sorrow. He who flatters most——

EVORA.

Ay, gentle lady, is the greatest rogue.
But though their courtly phrase—the truth to tell—
Is sweet as honey, yet be sure that I
Will take right caution of the envenomed sting
That lurks beneath.—But why in these vile weeds ?
Are you not born a princess ? And the king,
Has he not on you showered his royal favours ?

EDITH.

True—doubting nought which hath been of me told.

EVORA.

And did he not appoint you such high state
As fits your noble birth ? Were mine the change,
I would be decked in purple, cloth-of-gold,—
Ay, be a mass of jewels, every eye
That looked upon me dazzling ! O, 'tis shame
To see a princess like a bondmaid clad.

EDITH.

Full cause there is——But well know'st thou my love
For noble Godwin,—noble now indeed !
For he hath rank and titles, pomp and friends,
The mightiest in the court. But he, alas !
Already his poor forest maiden scorns,
Deserts his Edith for some courtly dame,
Whose rank and dowry promise large increase
Of wealth and honour.

EVORA.

Noble, call you him ?

Out on his nobleness ! a scurvy groom,
A serf-born drudge, a poor swine-monger, whom
I scarce had deigned to bless ! O could I see him,
I'd lower his proud nobility ; I'd tell him,
Though all the court were present——

EDITH.

Peace, Evora,

I must not hear thee speak of Godwin thus.
I deemed his truth firm as the eternal hills ;
And hope is mine, though round his brow the clouds
Of falsehood darkly lour, that honour's sun
Will on his loftiness break forth, and make him
Bright with its glory, as in days gone by.
I would not he should learn my altered state,
Till I have proved his heart.

EVORA.

But surely you

Will never see him thus ?

EDITH.

Even as I am.

EVORA.

So would not I. No, by my troth, I first

Would ransack every wardrobe in the palace.
I'd load myself with gems, and my full train
Should stretch throughout the hall, with twenty slaves
In glittering habits to uphold its length.
I'd be indeed a princess.

EDITH.

Silly wench,
I scorn to win him by the outward show
Of gilded pomp. Love, pure and simple love,
Without one taint of proud ambition, shall
Make him for ever mine, or I to courts
Will bid a last farewell.

EVORA.

St. Guthlac aid us !
For he approaches, lady. Well-a-day !
Plainly do I foresee that rustic garb
Will find no grace in his star-gazing eye.
A sparkling coronet had conjured up
A thousand tender thoughts of past affection.
O, that you would but list to my wise counsel ! [*Exit.*

EDITH.

There is in her simplicity of speech
Some truth, I fear. Be still my trembling heart ;
The dreaded trial comes. [*Retires.*

Enter Godwin—(splendidly dressed.)

GODWIN.

How changed are all things ! Lowly bow the humble,
While proud ones on me smile ; and earth, that seemed
A dark and howling wilderness, shines out
A paradise of beauty. Yet am I
The happier for this change ? No ; still my thirst
For splendid greatness is unslaked, as when

I at the foot of this pre-eminence
Lay pining in the shade, for mountain towers
O'er mountain as I rise. Brief rest for me,
Till I have reached that broad and sunny height,
On which no shadow falls of loftier things.
I now shall climb and sit among the stars
That rule the lower world. It is foretold,
That from this bridal shall a son be born,
Whose brows will wear the imperial crown of England.
[*Observes Edith.*

Death to my state! How, Edith, cam'st thou here?
Hast thou already, broken-hearted, died,
And comes thy gentle spirit to upbraid?
How couldst thou learn, so soon, that I was false?
Why didst thou hither come?

EDITH.

How could I stay
In Selwood's lonely shades, where every sound
Of tuneful bird, and stream, and hollow wind,
And every grove, and rock, and leafy bower
Reminded me of Godwin?
So desolate was I, so woe-begone,
That longer had I tarried in those woods,
I should indeed have broken-hearted died.

GODWIN.

Be of good cheer, since we again have met,
And thou hast found me all—ay, more than all
My wildest hopes imagined.

EDITH.

I have heard
Of thy great sudden fortune, and in that
Rejoice to learn thy merits will no more
Languish, like sunless flowers, amid the gloom

Of low obscurity. I too have heard—
For ill news travels with the lightning's speed,—
Ill news indeed for me ! that thou must wed
A peerless maiden of exalted birth,
Fit mate for thy new honours : and, alas !
These heavy tidings have thy words confirmed.
O, then what cheer in this sad world for me ?

GODWIN.

The brightest hopes, dear Edith, should be thine.

EDITH.

Cheat me no more with words of tender falsehood,
But rather chide me roughly from thy sight :
'Twill aid, perchance, this heart to bear the woes
That press so heavy on me.

GODWIN.

Chide thee ? No,
Not for my Earldom, loved one.

EDITH.

O, my lord,
I must forego all claim to be beloved,
Or ever more remembered, by Earl Godwin.

GODWIN.

Call me not Lord or Earl, my beautiful ;
Call me thine own dear Godwin, dear as when
We blithely wandered through the twilight glades
Of Selwood's tuneful forest : when to all
My dreams of future grandeur thou wouldst list,
Leaning upon this arm, and then look up
Smiling so sweetly—ay, but doubtingly——

EDITH.

Recall not to my mind those happy hours,
Fled never to return ! Ah ! pray forgive
My presence here. 'Tis but once more to gaze,

A few brief moments, on that faithless face :
'Tis but once more to hear that voice, which I
Shall never hear again : 'tis but to take
A last, a sad farewell,—and then return
To Selwood's lonely shades, there soon to find
An early grave beneath the forest flowers.

GODWIN.

Talk not of dying——

EDITH.

Wherefore should I live ?

Can earth afford one solitary joy
To me, a friendless orphan, scorned, forsaken
By him in whom my soul had treasured up
Her sum of worldly bliss ? O, Godwin, Godwin !
Could I have once believed, when we at morn
Or evening's golden hour the green woods sought,
And, harmonizing with thy voice of love,
Their blessed melodies came o'er my heart,
Till earth to me seemed an abode for gods,—
Could I have then believed that voice of thine
Was like the mermaid's, which the sea-boy hears
In music wandering o'er the moonlight deep,
Prophetic of the storm that soon shall sink
His fated barque amid the ocean surge ?

GODWIN—(*aside.*)

If thou, Ambition, listen to her voice,
Despite thy struggles shipwrecked wilt thou be,
With all thy hopes, on honour's perilous shore.

EDITH.

Yet did my heart forbode, when last we parted,
That regal halls and stirring scenes of pomp
Would cause thee to forget thy forest-maid.
But I forgive thee, though my sad lone heart

For this be sorely shent.
And freely, Godwin, I confess thou hast
Beyond thy strength been tempted. Fare thee well !
A long, a last farewell ! When death's cold dews
Hang on these brows, my quivering lips shall breathe
A blessing on thee, and a prayer that thou
Mayst long be happy with thy lady bride,
And glory with thee dwell.—Forgive these tears :
Soon shall I cease to weep.

GODWIN.

Come, dry thine eyes,
Those eyes that through their dewy lashes shine
Like stars amid the humid mists of eve.
Ever-beloved, we will not, cannot part.

EDITH.

Wouldst thou deceive me still, when well I know
The nuptial garlands are prepared, and waits
Thy bride in costly robes of glittering pomp ?
On to the altar, and for ever leave
The broken-hearted Edith to her tears.

GODWIN.

No, child of beauty, I will never leave thee.
This hasty marriage is a state intrigue,
Not of my seeking, but the King's command :
And though another bride I'm doomed to wed,
Thou hast my heart ; here shalt thou ever reign,
While all the wealth and state my fortunes yield,
In secret on thy beauty shall be lavished.

EDITH.

Heaven's goodness keep me ! can I hear aright ?
What do thy words import ?

GODWIN.

That thou shalt be

My soul's true bride, and this Ulfmando's sister
Inherit but the title.

EDITH.

I am indeed

A debtor to thy lordly courtesy,
Beyond all hope such kindness to repay.
Why thou dost to o'erflowing fill the measure
Of thy dark falsehood ! Hath the wanton court
Tainted so soon thy manners ? made thee base,
Yea, doubly base ? O, Godwin, Godwin !
Thou wert to me the bright May-morning sun,
That made life's rosy flowers of hope and love
Spring in their freshness forth ; but evil clouds
Have all thy lustre dimmed, and thou art fallen
From virtue and from truth,—dishonoured, lost
To all that makes man noble.

GODWIN.

Nay, but Edith——

EDITH.

Thou to thy cruelty hast added insult,
Deep, bitter insult ! Didst thou deem that I,
Although a cottage-maid of low desert,
Should be the willing slave of thy desires,
Thankful for such base service ? No, let me
Become the meanest drudge, an honest beggar
In tattered garments clad, rather than wear
The gem-besplangled livery of disgrace !

GODWIN.

Wilt thou not to me list ?

EDITH.

No : I have stayed
Too long to hear thee. Yet be thou assured,

That I will meet thee once again, where thou
Shalt least expect to find me. Then, despite
His marriage joys, his titles, and his rank,
Earl Godwin shall in bitterness repent
That he insulted, scorned, and set at nought
The love of Edith, Selwood's forest maid.

[*Exit.*

GODWIN.

And must I lose her thus? I must, or lose
Wealth, honour, power, and fame.—
Ambition, thou thy golden cup hast drugged
With venom'd gall; yet in the draught is found
Blissful intoxication, and I'll quaff
Thy potion to the lees, though madness follow.
This night will I the enchanted forest seek
Of Rimmon, and consult—I know their haunt—
The witches of Dunraven's magic glen.
If they but show what shall be, and let that
Which must be lead to glory, I will on,
Nor flinch, though to attain it——

Soft awhile!

If, reckless, I, like an unhelmed barque,
Before the tempest of ambition drive,
Still tossed from surge to surge, I shall be dashed
On passion's shore, heaped with a thousand wrecks,
And perish timelessly. To know the worst
That may be, will a warning beacon prove
To guide me through the storm, and teach me how
To shun approaching ruin. Ah, poor Edith!
That light which should have been my constant star,
Is in the tempest lost,—lost,—lost,—for ever!

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Hall in the House of Elgitha.*

Enter Elgitha and Waldimar.

ELGITHA.

O, if thou hast the least regard or love
For thy Elgitha, tell me—tell me what
Mysterious doom awaits thee.

WALDIMAR.

Better thou
Shouldst never, never hear of what befalls
The ill-starred Waldimar. This joyous night,
Gay Summer's festival, the woods will ring ⁽²²⁾
With harp and timbrel, and the merry shout
Of youth and maiden met in frolic dance;
Love, breathing odours, through the leafy shades
By Beauty's side will wander. Laughing eyes,
The stars of earth outshining those in heaven,
Through the green bowers their sapphire beams shall
 dart,
And Gladness spread o'er all her rosy bloom.
But we, Elgitha——
We may not in those scenes of joyance meet.—
No, we shall meet no more !

ELGITHA.

Thou canst not mean it.

WALDIMAR.

The groves their leaves will bathe in ruddy light,
And hold discourse with music. But grim Darkness
Will sit on Vodah's rock, where at her call
Shall gather hideous forms of other worlds
Winged with blue lightning, grisly hags that weave
Blood-spells to plague mankind, and shadowy Death

On his pale war-horse, followed by all hell ! ⁽²³⁾
Silent, and cold, and deep beneath that rock
The waters flow, in which shall soon be done
A deed no tongue must name.

ELGITHA.

O, thy wild words like maniac ravings sound,
And, if I listen, I as wild shall be.
Thy heart nor friendship, love, nor pity feels.

WALDIMAR.

Friendship nor love ? O, my life-love for thee
Is deeper than the fulness of the ocean,
And measureless as the wide heavens in which
The East and West both find their distant homes !
Nay, but for thee I should from hence depart
Without a sigh. O, in this world there dwelt
No charm or joy, till thy rich beauty came
On my lone darkness, like some fairy isle
Cheating at eve the wandering mast-boy's sight ;
And, like that isle, ere I can call thee mine,
Thou fadest from me for ever !

ELGITHA.

Tell me, I do adjure thee by thy love,
This horrid mystery.—Nay, then thus I'll grasp
Thy garments, thus for ever to thee cling
While I have life, till thou thy fate reveal.

WALDIMAR.

It is—to die !

ELGITHA.

To die ! O how ? and when ?
Heart-smiting words ! Save me from madness, Heaven !
Die ! for what guilty deed ?—
Or whose decree thine innocence hath doomed
To find an early grave ?

WALDIMAR.

Nay, be at peace, and calm thy throbbing heart.
Since my inevitable fate draws near,
Summon thy strength and fortitude to bid
The soul-despairing Waldimar farewell.

ELGITHA.

O stay ! one moment stay ! Yes, I have strength,
Have fortitude to share with thee thy doom,
Whate'er it be ; for life, without thy sight,
To me were death. Come, lead me, lead me forth
To torments, infamy, to racks and fires ;
I'll bear all pangs, all shame with thee to die,
And thus we'll perish in each other's arms ! [*Embracing.*]

WALDIMAR.

I must reveal, though the red gulph should yawn
And close its jaws upon me !
I was, Elgitha, ere I saw the light,
Doomed by a mother's awful vow to be
A victim, self-destroyed, to our dread god,
The eternal Siva. My dark hour is nigh.
At midnight the devoted Waldimar
Will his loved mother's solemn vow perform.

[*Elgitha faints in the arms of Waldimar.*]

Enter Ermingild.

ERMINGILD.

Thou disobedient one, and is it well
To find thee loitering in Elgitha's bower ?
Is, then, thy mother's presence irksome grown,
That thou companionship must ever seek
With this strange Christian maid ? My love for thee,
And all my anxious care and toil, might claim
The few brief hours thou yet hast in thy keeping.

ELGITHA—(*reviving.*)

Christ of his mercy save thee from this deed !
Thy mother here ? O cruel, cruel mother !
Recall thy horrid oath, preserve thy son,
Or thou wilt in the fire that ever burneth
Lie howling endless ages !

ERMINGILD—(*shrieking.*)

Ha ! false, ungrateful son, thou hast betrayed us !
Ruin and madness ! whither shall I flee ?

ELGITHA.

Flee to the Cross with penitence and tears :
Revoke the fatal vow thy lips pronounced,
Nor slay thine only son. Penance and fasts,
And painful pilgrimage in sackcloth clad,
With ashes on thine head, may pardon win——

ERMINGILD.

Away ! I will not hear thee——

ELGITHA.

Thou a mother ?

Thou, savage woman of a savage race ? ⁽²⁴⁾
The ruthless eagle, on her rock of storms,
From danger guards her young with watchful eye,
And bears them on her pinions through the clouds ;
The tigress on the hunter, yelling, springs,
And strives with Death her offspring to defend ;
But thou, more cruel than the fellest monster,
Hast doomed thy son, thine only son, to die—
Die self-destroyed ! O, couldst thou e'er have known
A mother's tender love ? Could thy stern breast
Have ever fed him with life's lacteal streams ?
Or been a pillow for his infant slumbers
That breast, which doomed him ere his birth to fiends ?

ERMINGILD.

Blasphemer, silence ! I a mother am,
And glory in my vow. He hath the streams
Of being from this bosom drank, and in
These arms reposed, while o'er his slumbers I
Have watched the midnight hours with all the love
That fondest mothers feel. I proudly nursed
The rose-lipped boy to manhood, till he grew
An offering worthy of the gods ; and now,
Without a sigh, I yield the loved one up.

ELGITHA.

Pagan, the ban of angry Heaven will crush thee !
Come, Waldimar, leave thou this impious woman,
Whose vow, like a dark incubus, hath hung
On thy young days, and made thy life a curse.
Awake ! and fling the hideous demon off ;
The night is past, and a new morning dawns.

ERMINGILD.

Come with thy mother,—come, and be a god !

ELGITHA.

O stay, my Waldimar, go not from hence !
Save me, O save me from the last despair,
From maniac frenzy !—save thyself, or smite,
Smite thy Elgitha dead ! Here let me fall,
Fall at thy feet, bathed in my gushing blood,
That I may not behold thy fearful doom.

ERMINGILD.

Now, Waldimar, list to my awful charge :
A mother, by her blessing and her curse ;
By that dread Being whose thou art, and who
Waits for thee on dim Vodah's stormy rock ;
By the deep thunder of that voice which calls

Thee hence to meet the dwellers of the cloud ;
And by the winds which from thy native land
Shall yearly come, and on that rock of death
In plaintive melodies thy wild dirge sing,—
I solemnly command thee come with me !

WALDIMAR.

Mother, I come ! I yield to thy behest.
Sunbeam of earth, my own beloved Elgitha,
My heart is broken !——

[Falls—Elgitha shrieks and sinks beside him.]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The great Hall of the Palace.**Enter Godwin and Evora, meeting.*

GODWIN.

EVORA here? Sure half the forest casts
Its scum upon the palace. If report
Of my success be bruited far abroad,
The court will be with serfs and bond-maids thronged.
[*Aside.*
What can have brought thee hither?

EVORA.

Son of Wulfnoth,
Should I that question echo back to thee,
Thy answer would be mine, if we spoke truth,—
The wish to better my hard luck at home.

GODWIN.

What merits canst thou have to bring thee thrift,
Save a new face? which, though it might at home
For something comely pass, at court will be
But homely thought, I ween.

EVORA.

Why, not the court,
No, nor thy gaudy garments, let them mend
Thy fortunes as they may, have aught improved
Thy hog-sty manners.—Merit! what, forsooth,
Think'st thou all merit centred in thyself?

'Tis not for thee to measure my deserts :
Would thou hadst all thine own !

GODWIN.

They will be mine.

EVORA.

And speedy may they come ! And when they do,
Thou'lt be a scurvy Lord ; glad once again
To tend thy father's hogs—ay, and to feed
Upon their husks and acorns.

GODWIN.

Thou must learn,
My lady malapert, to treat Earl Godwin
With more respect and worship, and forget
That thou hast ever known him in the forest.

EVORA.

Earl Godwin should have learnt to treat himself
With more respect. Is it the mode, I pray,
For Lords and Earls to break their vows of faith,
And hold their plighted honour as a thing
Of no account ? If so, what right have they
To claim from others homage or respect ?

GODWIN.

What, saucy maiden, do thy words imply ?

EVORA.

That thou, thy false heart yielding elsewhere worship,
Hast basely wronged a lovely, virtuous maid ;
One thy superior, far as Eve's bright star
Is to the ditch-born tadpole. Hither I
With her did come——

GODWIN.

To seek a wealthy husband.
Some old, time-crazed, and war-worn soldier, who
Shall tell thee endless tales of past exploits

In battle-fields and amorous ladies' bowers :
One who, o'erseamed with scars and maimed with wounds,
Wants a kind nurse to tend his second childhood,
And lullaby him into early slumbers ;
Or some court-servitor, whose weak head dreams
That he a maiden of the woods shall find
Chaste and retiring as the violet flower,
And who defied temptation till it came
In his bewitching person——

EVORA.

Patience, Heaven !
The fool will chafe me into downright rage.

GODWIN.

Two errant damsels, sallying from the woods
To lurk about the court, and seek adventures
Strange and romantic. Well ; good speed be yours,
And fortune mate you goldenly,—for that
I doubt not is your aim.

EVORA.

Swine-keeping groom !
Think'st thou I'd mate, like thee, with palsied age,
Deformity, and ugliness and sin,
So they brought riches in their frightful train ?
Go wed, where neither love nor beauty lives
To bless thine after life ; and perjury make
Thy marriage-bed a sleepless nest of adders !
Soon shalt thou find, deep craftsman as thou art,
How gloriously thy cunning hath befooled thee.
Then how thy greatness I shall laugh to scorn. [*Exit.*]

GODWIN.

Some hidden meaning, which I cannot guess,
Lies in the words of that tongue-doughty scold.

Enter Edric.

EDRIC.

This fellow here again ! Why, no man soon
Will dare approach the King without his leave.
Art thou chief warder of the royal chamber ?

GODWIN.

Art thou chief executioner, and com'st
With bloody hand to tell the King thou hast done
Thine office featly on some hapless wretch,
'Neath court displeasure fallen ?

EDRIC.

Destruction crush

Thy very bones to dust ! And yet must I,
To pluck the secret of his lineage forth,
Soothe him with artful words of kind regard. [*Aside.*
Brave son of Wulfnoth, how comes this, that thou
Wilt ever cast on me such fierce contempt,
Disdaining kin with Mercia's Duke to claim ?

GODWIN.

Who told thee, fool, that I was Wulfnoth's son ?
Claim kin to thee ! No, sooner would I claim
Relationship with hell's dark master-fiend.
Ere I would own thee of my blood, I'd call
A scurvy dog my brother.

EDRIC—(*aside.*)

I'll make thee howl for this.

Enter Canute, Turkeetul, Rolf Iric, Guards and Attendants.

CANUTE.

Emma of Normandy shall be our Queen,
And quickly change her weeds of widowhood
To bridal robes of state.—

EDRIC.

My lord, I come——

CANUTE.

Out-crafting all my foes, her Norman brother
Fast to my will I'll bind, when for the shores
Of Norway we our hostile war-ships steer ;
While he no more shall threat this isle t' invade,
And set the banished line of Ethelred
On our imperial seat.—

EDRIC.

Now, good my liege——

CANUTE.

And joy will be in English hearts to see
The mother of their native princes sit,
As our loved consort, on the Saxon throne.—

EDRIC.

So please my lord, I come to claim the lands
And Thanedom of that Athelburg, who slew
Edwin the king of peasants ; for which deed
His head bowed to the block.—Was it not well
By me contrived? *[Aside to the King.]*

CANUTE.

Turkeetul, send

Forthwith ambassadors, a splendid train,
To Normandy ; and bid them for us win
The hand of Lady Emma.

EDRIC.

Good my lord,

Will not your Highness with those promised gifts
Endow me ?

CANUTE.

Why comest thou at such an hour?—

Some other time.

EDRIC.

Some other time, my lord ?

Thou didst not bid me come some other time
When I in battle-day, deserting Edmund,
Thy banner joined with Mercia's gallant host,
And won for thee half England's mighty throne :
Thou didst not bid me come some other time
When I the death of Edmund planned ; nor when
I told thee I had slain him, and by that
Bold deed the cloven diadem of England
United on thy brows. And have I done,
For thee done all these offices, and dipt
My hands in kingly blood, now to be scorned ?
Bid, like a base and needy groom, to wait
And come some other time for those rewards
So justly mine ?—which, when bestowed, will leave
Thee a deep debtor to my faithful service.

CANUTE.

Slave ! if thy words be true, thy fit reward
Is instant death.—Silence confirms thy guilt.
Thou self-condemned, thou murderer of him
Who both by treaty and by friendship was
Our royal brother, on thy head shall rest
His life-blood and thine own, for thy base hand,
The Lord's anointed hath destroyed. Guards ! seize
The audacious, guilty Edric.

EDRIC.

I too late

Have found, that no true brotherhood unites
The sons of crime. My services, false king,
Thou dost no longer need ; and now am I
Cast off, like th' useless fragment of a wreck,

On which the sea-boy through the tempest surge
Hath safely reached the shore.

CANUTE.

No ; like a cloud
That long hath hung betwixt me and my people,
Hiding the sunlight from them of my love,
And with its shadow darkening all the land.

EDRIC.

Hell-plagues fall on thee ! I was but thy tool,
The bloody instrument which thou didst use
To hew down all that——

CANUTE.

Drag the traitor hence !
See instant execution on him done,
And cast his headless carcass in the river. (25)
[*The Guards seize Edric, and Canute retires.*]

GODWIN.

Thy race of treason, rapine, fraud, and blood
At length is ended : and cut off art thou
From honours, wealth, and life, to be no more
Bowed to and worshipped. O, there never came
Requital more deservedly, than now
On thee hath fallen.

EDRIC.

Well, be it so ; at least
I've had my day, and those I leave behind
Can have but theirs ; which when, like mine, it ends,
Like mine it will be—nothing.
Though brief my day and stormy, it hath been,
Like the loud thunder, full of power and glory.
My path with victims hath been thickly strown,
And 'tis my sole regret that thou, proud kinsman,
Surviv'st my hate.—On thee light my last curse !

GODWIN.

Fool ! on thy own base soul that curse shall fall.
Thine shall not be the gallant soldier's death,
His burial, nor his grave. No weeping friends
With martial pomp, nor war-horse, helm, nor plume,
Nor spear, nor banner trailing in the dust,
Shall follow thee to a last peaceful home :
Nor holy priest nor solemn dirge wail forth
The warrior's funeral hymn. Thy death shall, like
Thy life, be foul and bloody ; and thy tomb
The unblest wave, that on its shores shall fling
Thy mangled carcass to the scoffing world,
And scorn to give so base a thing a last
Dark hiding-place to rot in.

[*Exit* Edric, *guarded and followed by* Godwin.]

CANUTE—(*coming forward.*)

Now shall my reign,
The struggling tempests of its winter past,
Be like the spring-sun in its golden light,
Making the green earth rich in fruits and flowers ;
While peaceful music, breathing through the land,
Shall fill all hearts with gladness.

Enter Elgitha.

ELGITHA.

Deign, mighty prince, to hear a wretch's prayer.

CANUTE.

Rise, and speak freely.

ELGITHA.

O, there is a tale
So fearful, wild, and ruthless, that it hangs
In terror on my pale and quivering lips——

CANUTE.

What story harrows thus thy frightened mind?

ELGITHA.

Thou know'st, great King, the captain of thy guards
Hath a young son,—a moody, wayward youth,
But of most gentle manners, with a heart
Wherein all good things dwell. His form is such
As few, in my weak judgment, equal, save
Your noble glory; ⁽²⁶⁾ and his face, though oft
Shaded with sadness, like the untiring sun
Through April clouds, beams sweetly, making all
Who look upon him happy.

CANUTE.

Ay, could they

Behold him with thine eyes.—Spare those deep blushes;
They are redolent of beauty and of love.
Proceed, Elgitha, with thy mystic tale.

ELGITHA.

The mother of the ill-fated Waldimar,
A wild and cruel pagan, ere his birth
Devoted him to her infernal gods;
And, doomed to sacrifice himself, he dies,
Ay, soul and body dies, this very night,
Unless thy power prevent the horrid deed.

CANUTE.

And can it be there lives within our realms
A mother, who would doom her only son
A sacrifice to fiends? By blessed Cuthbert——

Enter Officer.

OFFICER.

My sovereign liege, ambassadors are come
From Norway——

CANUTE.

Sent by whom ?

OFFICER.

The insurgent chiefs

And nobles of the land, inviting thee
To claim that Northern crown. Olave they hate,
And are resolved, if thou their cause wilt aid,
To drive him from the kingdom.

CANUTE.

They shall have
The strength of Denmark, and the bravest men
That England holds. Prepare, my worthy Earls.
Here's news to set a warrior's heart on fire !
To Norway's coast three hundred ships shall waft us.

ELGITHA.

O lend to me, my lord, a gracious ear.
Have pity on the son of Zandagast.
Save one so worthy of thy princely care
From that dread condemnation which awaits him.

CANUTE.

He shall be saved. But certes he will not
Madly perform his mother's hell-bound oath ?

ELGITHA.

Alas ! my lord, by her hath he been taught
From reason's dawn that death-vow to revere,
Which on his morn of life in darkness hung,
Like storms that rest upon the mountain's brow.
O, he hath been as one who in a land
Of night and shadows wandereth, and his mind
Hath not been of this world ; yet through the gloom
His virtues shine, as on the evening clouds
The rainbow sheds its beauty. But, dread sire,
Such reverence doth he to his mother pay,

That nothing can forefend him, save thy power,
From the dire purpose of her fatal oath.

OFFICER.

The ambassadors——

CANUTE.

Receive them courteously.

Give ample largess. Norway ! she is mine
By right of birth. My father conquered all
Her ocean kings, and o'er the turbulent north
His sceptre-sword outstretched.—

ELGITHA.

O yet, my liege,

Amid the anxious cares of regal state,
Remember mercy to poor Waldimar.
No tongue hath he in his own cause to plead ;
No voice, save mine, intreats that he may live ;
And bashfulness had made me with him die
In everlasting silence, had not love
Broke through all forms, enforcing me to sue,
In the deep agony of wild despair,
For mercy at thy footstool.—
Those who should be the first for him to plead,
Have with the flowers of death enwreathed his brows ;
Those who should be the first to save and bless him,
His murderers are, and glory in the guilt
That dooms him dead. O, then, be thou his friend,
And rescue him from the demon's frightful grasp,
Who on the midnight steep of Odinswold
Waits to receive his victim.

CANUTE.

Ay, the north—

All the wide north, to eastern deserts stretched,
Shall now be mine. O, for a thousand ships

To cover the deep seas !—
Denmark and England, Norway added too !
Why Sweden soon must fall——

ELGITHA.

My lord, my lord !
Speak, ere it be too late. Shall he be saved ?

CANUTE.

My word is past. Take thou this royal signet,
And with a band of guards go to the abode
Of Zandagast ; bid him, with all his house,
Attend us here. I know 'twill please thee well
To be thyself the saviour of that youth.

ELGITHA.

Glory and fame rest on thy gallant arms,
And angels be thy guard in battle hour !
I fly on wings of joy to do thy bidding. [Exit.

CANUTE.

Chieftains ! the fields of bright renown outspread
Far to the north before us. If we put
Our ready sickles in, we shall not fail
To reap a golden harvest. O how brief
A time have we in which to gather fame !
Our infancy with sleep and ignorance lies
Nursed in the lap of softness, and weak boyhood,
Dreaming of joy, with idle folly plays ;
While, if we count the years doled out to man,
Comes on us hoary age, barren and cold
As winter's frosty eve, and steals away
Our energy and fire, till we become
The feeble shadows of our former selves,
Living despised and useless. Let us, then,
Eternal fame achieve, while yet our bright
But fleeting summer in its splendour shines.

O, who would live, that hath one spark of honour,
A few short years, and, like an ill-told tale,
Perish from all men's memories ! Or like some,
Who waste in foamy wrath their little hour
Without one noble act, and are at last
But as a wintry torrent, mountain-born,
Which swells in thunder o'er its barrier rocks,
And when the summer comes is heard no more,
Leaving its naked channel dry and dusty !
Such shall not be my course, for I will do
Imperial actions, which the tuneful Scalds
Who throng my court shall to the end of time
Transmit with glory. ⁽²⁷⁾ [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the House of Zandagast.*

Enter Zandagast, Ermingild, and Waldimar.

ZANDAGAST.

The hour is come, my son, that we must part.—
These tears gush forth so fast, they misbeseem
A true Slavonian soldier. Thou hast been,
Through thy few years, all dutiful and good ;
Yet now, wert thou to die a warlike death,
Die by the sword of man upon thy foe,
I would not with a tear thy grave bedew.
But to behold thee, with that noble form,
Led forth to be a victim, self-destroyed,
Tempts me to curse thy mother's fatal vow.

ERMINGILD.

Speak not like an apostate from thy faith.
With all a mother's fond, unbounded love,
With all the reverence of deep worship paid

To powers that are above, I on thee look,
My noble son, without one tear of weakness.
O, thou art all—nay more, far more, than all
To which a parent's proudest wish aspires,—
And I have to this state of glory brought thee.

WALDIMAR—(*aside.*)

Perish the night, and may it be accurst,
Which said my mother hath brought forth a son !
Ah ! would her vow had been, on the red pile
To cast me in the hour that I was born ;
Then had she been most kind, and rescued me
From the brain-maddening horrors of this night.

ERMINGILD.

Now let me gaze, brave Waldimar, my last
On that loved brow.—Methinks it beams already
With a celestial beauty ! Let me take,
With awful homage take a last embrace,
For I embrace a god !—
Farewell, bright child of heaven ! compared with whom
The first-born of a monarch is a beggar.
Star of the morn, brief will our parting be.
Pass a few months, or years, and we again
Shall meet in full assembly of the gods.

ZANDAGAST.

When thine abode is on the stormy cloud,
Remember oft thy sire ; and to the battle
Come in the lightning and the thunder's power,
And shake thy gleamy terrors o'er his foes,
That he may win the victory.—
But what will victory henceforth be to me,
Who have no heir to inherit my renown,
Or unto other times transmit mine honours ?
But O, my son, that shouldst to me have been

The hope and staff of my declining years,
A loving father's prayers shall oft invoke
The shadow of thy presence. (28)

WALDIMAR.

Dearest parents !

Where'er my disembodied spirit roam,—
If to the regions of the golden sun,
Where night nor shadow yet hath found a home,
And in their undecaying beauty bloom
The flowers of paradise ; if doomed to ride
The struggling whirlwind with eternal darkness,—
Still shall I think of you with filial love,
With honour and due reverence. Heaven protect
And bless you, bless you both ! A thousand thoughts
Rush to my dying heart, but not a word
Gives to them utterance.—Then farewell for ever !

[*Exit.*

ERMINGILD.

He nobly will become that lofty station
The gods have destined for him. Rouse thyself.—
Come, be not so cast down. We shall, ere long,
Behold him in his glory.

ZANDAGAST.

Ah ! no more

Shall I behold my boy, my gallant boy !
My soul can not endure eternal parting
With one so dear in this unwarlike guise.
I'll call him back. Ho, Waldimar ! Return
To thy sad father's arms ! I'll hold thee fast,
Fast to my heart, nor earth nor heaven shall part us !

ERMINGILD.

Forbear, Lord Zandagast. If thou persist
In this unmanly weakness, all the gods
Will rain down curses on thee.

ZANDAGAST.

Let them : I

Am curst already to the lowest depths !
My son, my son ! O, let me for thee die !
My life, ye gods, my life for his accept :
Spare his young years——Alas ! my prayers are vain :
I know his resolution. Would thou hadst
Been dumb for ever, ere thy lips pronounced
That vow which robs me of an only son !

ERMINGILD.

Rob thee ? Why thou wouldst rob the eternal gods !
Great as thy love, 'twill not endure with mine,
Thou man of slender faith, to be compared.
To save him from a meaner death, I'd joy
To spill this heart's best blood,—die, and re-die,
With countless agonies, to make him blest ! ⁽²⁹⁾
Imagine, Zandagast, we only send him
To a far brighter land of endless pleasure,—
That we shall both soon follow, there to meet
His spirit clad in ever-living pomp.
'Then peace and joy will to thy heart return,
And death be welcome though it come to-night.
'Tis this which to my soul its courage gives,
Which all the anguish for a mother's loss
In the pure flames of faith and hope dissolves,
Making these eyelids tearless.

Enter Elgitha and Guards.

ELGITHA.

We are come

To lead thee and thy household, by my lord
The King's command, into his Highness' presence.
Behold the royal signet.

ZANDAGAST.

We are here,
And ready to obey.

ELGITHA.

Call Waldimar.

ERMINGILD.

He is beyond the call of earthly kings :
He hath received a call to meet the gods !
Exalted far above all mortal power,
The mandate of the proudest shall he scorn.

ELGITHA.

Mercy of Heaven enshield me ! Hast thou sent,
Already sent him forth to self-destruction ;
To meet the powers of darkness, and become
That which I quake to think on ?

ERMINGILD.

Woman, we
Have sent him forth to join those mighty ones,
Who on their golden thrones, i' th' midnight sky,
Rule o'er all worlds by Siva's matchless power.

ELGITHA.

O, thou wild wolf of heathenness ! a mischief,
Fraught with all plagues, light on thee !

Ruthless parents !

Ye, who had no compassion on his youth,
Have done a deed to make——Ay, hear ye not
A wailing in the heavens ? Do ye not feel
The earth with horror to its centre tremble ?
Hark to those thunders ! 'Tis the demon shout
Of Hell exulting through her dark domains.
May the red-burning ague wither all
Your mortal strength ! May palsies blight your forms,
And beggary cast you forth to pine and perish,
Tended by famine, with no garb to clothe

Your frozen limbs, save winter's chilling snow !
May keen remorse, that worm which never dies,
Feed on your heart-strings ; and when ye find death,
Find no reprieve from torments ! O, despair,
Unutterable despair, doth madden me !

ZANDAGAST.

Her dreadful words do make my knees to smite
Against each other. Wild and frantic maid !
What interest hath she in this son of ours ?

ERMINGILD.

O, well know I the interest which she claims ;
And how her love-spells and her witching charms,
Like a malignant planet's influence, fell
On his young mind. But he hath 'scaped her snares,
And now is with——

ELGITHA.

The fiends ! the yelling fiends !
But I will fly and seek him ere too late.
I'll snatch him from their power, though the dark clouds
Cast forth their deepest thunders,—though the howl
Of countless demons rend the skies, and Hell
Enwrap me with its hottest, fiercest flames !
This amulet, this blessed Cross, wherein
Relics miraculous lie hidden, shall shield us ; ⁽³⁰⁾
Or if we perish, waft our joyous souls
On angel wings to heaven.

[*Exit.*

ERMINGILD.

Maniac Christian,
It is my comfort thou wilt be too late.
The guards attend impatient.

ZANDAGAST.

Lead me on.
I reck not if this hour it be to death.

ERMINGILD.

Up, Zandagast, and mail thee, like a man,
In fortitude and zeal. Guards, do your office.
Let come what may, I in this holy deed
Will glory, till life's last, faint sigh hath fled :
And these oppressing Christians shall be taught
That I can die a martyr to my faith,
Right bravely as the bravest of their saints.

ZANDAGAST.

Thou dost inspire me, loved, heroic wife,
With thine exalted spirit. Yes, these Christians,
Who have, for their devotion to the gods,
So many of our warlike tribes destroyed,
Shall find that I will not disgrace the blood
Which fills these veins, the true Slavonian blood !

ERMINGILD.

There spoke the dauntless warrior of the Wends.
Honour be ever on thy head, and scorn
Attend our foes ! I see thou art resolved.—
Now thy brave virtues once more rise, my lord,
In all their former strength, as mighty streams,
That hide their waters in the darksome earth,
Burst forth far off, and onward flow again,
Glittering in all their fulness. Be but thus,
And we shall fail not o'er our foes to triumph.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A deep and rocky gorge in a wild Forest.*

In the back ground, a rugged and lofty Rock, towering above the rest. A fire, blazing in the centre, partially illuminates the otherwise dark and savage appearance of the Scene.

Enter several Witches from different openings among the rocks.

FIRST WITCH.

SISTER, say, whence comest thou ?

SECOND WITCH.

I came upon the rushing hurricane,
Whose wings are plumed with lightning, from those isles
That lie, unknown to other worlds, beyond
The vast and desert ocean of the West,
Which never venturous seaman's keel hath ploughed.
There, with a red and savage race, amongst
The palmy groves and myrtle shades I sat
At bloody banquet on the flesh of men ;
At which the midnight moon turned pale, as far
The woods re-echoed to the wolfish howl
Of those grim cannibals. Here is the skull
Of kingly warrior, from whose brim they quaffed
Brain-maddening draughts ; and this the scalp of one, ⁽³¹⁾
Who murdered his own mother in a fit
Of drunken rage, as she sat feasting on
The carcass of a priest. These now I cast

On this enchanted fire, and from afar
The spirits of witchcraft shall the vapour scent,
And to our meeting flock.

THIRD WITCH.

I from the vast and burning desert come,
In which no mortal dwells. Across it passed
The caravan, in all its long array
Of many dyes and forms. The winds awoke,
When far and near those hot and lifeless plains
Their sandy billows rolled, as rolls the fierce
And tempest-troubled sea ; and, darkening heaven,
In crimson pillars like to fire uprose.
Then came in wrath the spirit of those wilds,
Who ever dwells with noiseless solitude,
And breathed upon that thirsty-fainting train
Of many pilgrim tribes. Silence and Death
Were there alone ! I from my cloudy car
Descended, and have here the heart of one
Whose bones lie whitening on that wilderness,
And in the flame, as incense to the powers
Whom we obey, I cast it.

FOURTH WITCH.

I come from where
The plague-fiend o'er the city spread his wings,
And darkness was upon it. Then were heard
Loud wailing, and deep groans, and bitter cries
Of dying agony, mixt with the din
Of reckless drunkenness and maddened riot.
The dead were every where ! and fainter came
Those sounds of mingled wassailry and woe,
Till all were silent.—Not a living form
Along the green streets wandered. Here are dews
I from the cold brows brushed of one, who fell

Beside his daughter's death-bed, whom all else
Had left to perish.—Cast them on the fire.

FIFTH WITCH.

I came from where that dull-eyed demon reigns,
Grim Bigotry, o'er all a saintly land
Of furious priests. There by the pile I stood
Of one, who to a pillar hung in chains,
Begirt with living fire : a Jew was he
Who would not yield the faith his fathers taught,
And a new creed embrace. In tortures long
He writhing lingered, and as o'er the coals
He grinned a blackened cinder, still there came
A dismal hollow voice from that dark mass,
Cursing the fell tormentors. From the ashes
I raked the fragments of his flame-bleached bones,
And, with a Christian infant's yet warm blood
Baptizing them, I on our May-fire cast
The magic relics.

CHORUS OF WITCHES AROUND THE FIRE.

On it fling all charms of might,
'Tis the witches' holy night.
Haste, ye spirits, from the flood,
From the war-field dyed in blood ;
From the caves that lie below,
Where the fires eternal glow ;
From the place where Murder stands
Smiling, with his gory hands,
On his victim ; from the waves
Where the eddyng whirlpool raves,
Closing o'er the sea-boy's head,
As he sinks to th' ocean dead ;

From the earthquake's sulphury womb,
A proud city's sudden tomb,
Crumbled in its pomp and lust
By the clashing rocks to dust ;
From the river's hidden fountains,
Where no mortal step intrudes, ⁽³²⁾
Where with gold are filled the mountains
Of those wealthy solitudes ;
From that burning throne of light,
Whose dread glories o'er the night,
When the stars their pale watch keep,
In red surges flash and sweep,
Where the polar spirit reigns,
Binding fast in icy chains
Ocean, who, struck dumb, no more
Howls along his silent shore ;
From the lightning's secret home,
Come, ye potent spirits, come !
Empty be the shades of hell
Of her demons, dark and fell ;
Hither flock ye to our call,
Come, ye potent spirits all,
To the sacrifice of death——
Hark ! unbidden steps advance :
Soft !—break off the magic dance.

Enter Godwin.

FIRST WITCH.

Rash fool ! dost thou not fear t' approach this place,
Where we perform our mysteries ?

GODWIN.

No ! for I
Can nothing fear that wears a human shape ;

Though, sooth to say, ye bear but slight resemblance
To any earthly thing.

SECOND WITCH.

Why com'st thou hither?

GODWIN.

To learn my future destiny,—to see
The shadows of those substances which shall
Oppose my coming course; and, seeing, shun
The rocks and shoals of fortune.

FIRST WITCH.

Back ! nor seek
With daring hand to draw that veil which hides
The dark unknown.

GODWIN.

If wealth be your desire,
Ye fearful Evocators of the dead,
Demand and have it——

FIRST WITCH.

Thou hast no wealth for us,
Who know full surely all that earth contains
Unransacked in its bosom. Know we, too,
That greatness is thy aim. Thou shalt be great.

SECOND WITCH.

Ay, but not happy.

FIRST WITCH.

Now depart, or dread
The awful sight of those, whose presence would
Thy marrow freeze to ice, and mar thy brain
With cureless frenzy.

GODWIN.

Seek ye to affright me?
More will I know, though on me ye let loose
The banded fiends below ! Let the pale lightning

[*Thunder.*

Singe these full locks, and thunders shake yon cliffs
From their foundations ; let the yawning earth
Open beneath my feet, I'll bravely dare
Your utmost power, howe'er ye have obtained it,
And will search deeper yet ; for now I feel
My soul wrought up—ay, to the highest pitch
Of a resistless courage.

SECOND WITCH.

This is no common mortal.

FIRST WITCH.

Then shalt thou,
If that bold courage fail not, learn thy doom.
Sound yonder magic horn, which hangs beneath
Those beetling rocks.

GODWIN.

No horn do I behold.

FIRST WITCH.

Turn to the north while thus I wave my wand,
And breathe the Runic spell, ⁽³³⁾ which must not fall
On mortal ear, or death would be his lot,
If unbaptized, with magic rites, in blood.

[*The Witch utters inaudibly the spell, and a gigantic hand, encircled with flames, is thrust forth from the rocks, holding a horn suspended by chains of fire. Godwin starts back appalled ; but recovering his fortitude, he seizes the horn, which he sounds, and its strange and dismal tones are reverberated from rock to rock. The hand of fire is slowly withdrawn, and the rocks yawn asunder with a terrific noise, discovering a wide cavern filled with purple flames, wherein appear many awful and hideous figures, which beckon Godwin to advance.*]

FIRST WITCH.

Now, earth-born child of dust,
If thou wilt dare to rush amid yon flames
And with those deathless beings hold communion,
They shall, at our command, to thee reveal
All thy hereafter actions,—for to them
The past is as the present, and the future
But as the past.

GODWIN.

Their aspect and their shape
Are terrible ; and what their power may be,
By stretch of mortal thought can not be measured.
Yet pant I on futurity to gaze
With such intense desire, that I those flames
Will enter reckless, though mortality
Should perish in this daring !

*[Rushes wildly into the cavern, which closes
on him with a tremendous crash.]*

CHORUS OF WITCHES.

Show him what his deeds shall be,—
Falsehood, blood, and tyranny !
Man of ever-boundless pride,
Joy with thee shall not abide.
Mightiest noble thou shalt stand
Of the mighty in the land ;
Yet an outlaw shalt thou roam,
Cursed and scorned, without a home !
Thine shall be a stormy life,
All thy days shall pass in strife ;
Then, when thy last toils are done,
And thy proudest honours won,
Thou shalt to the grave descend,
Fated to an evil end.

Torn from England's regal heir,
England's crown thy son shall wear ;
But its pomp shall seal his doom,
Leading to a blood-stained tomb.
Like the meteor, like the wind,
Leaving not a trace behind,
Shall thy line, thy glory fade
In oblivion's deepest shade ;
Nor from thee shall mortal claim
Title, lineage, rank, or name.

[The rocks open again, and Godwin enters from the cavern.]

FIRST WITCH.

And hast thou seen——

GODWIN.

Too much, too much, ye hags !
Am I a wolf, a fang-armed beast of prey,
To act such savage deeds ? May this right hand
Be palsied, withered, and refuse to lift
A sword or spear ; may all the plagues——

A VOICE FROM THE CLOUDS.

Forbear !—

A VOICE FROM EITHER SIDE OF THE ROCKS.

Forbear !—

A VOICE BENEATH THE GROUND.

Forbear !—

FIRST WITCH.

Why, doubting fool ! since thou wert bent to know
What should betide thee in succeeding years,
If we have power, more shalt thou yet behold.
Ye visions of the future, show this man
The end of his ambition.

[Thunder.]

[*The rocks burst open, and discover a royal banquet, crowded with shadowy guests. A figure, representing Godwin, but in years, stands before a king, appealing to Heaven. A Priest offers him the corsened bread (34) on a salver, which he swallows, and is instantly thrown into convulsions, and falls on the ground. Solemn music is heard, till the rocks close with deep thunder, pausing while the Witch speaks.*

FIRST WITCH.

Behold thyself, in years which are to come,
And gaze upon the mighty Godwin's doom,—
The end of all his proud aspiring dreams,
The dismal close of many long years spent
In turbulence and struggles after greatness !
Behold the fate of perjury and murder :
For with the blood of England's royal line
Shall thy dark soul be stained, and thou shalt die,
Die with a falsehood on thy lips to Heaven,
And so be aye accursed !

GODWIN.

Foul hags, avaunt !

The pride and hope of Hell ! May on your heads
Plagues measureless be hurled ! May those grim fiends
Who are your vassals, henceforth be and ever
Your fell tormentors !

[*Exit.*

FIRST WITCH.

Light as the summer dew on mountain rock
His curses fall on us.—But hark ! they come :
Those deep and solemn tones proclaim th' approach
Of that half-maniac youth, who yields himself
A sacrifice to the wild spirits of wrath.
Away ! and mount yon summit's lofty top :

There perch, like cormorants watching for their prey,
To see the death-leap of this frantic fool ;
Then, as he falls, with flocking fiends and spectres
We'll shout and chaunt his dirge-song.

[*Witches vanish, and the fire disappears. Music solemn and plaintive.—Enter a procession of pagan Priests—some bearing torches, others branches of trees, garlands, and musical instruments ; the High-Priest in the centre, leading Waldimar, clad in white garments, and crowned with flowers.*

CHORUS OF THE MICKLI, OR SCLAVONIAN PRIESTS.

Gods of earth, and sea, and air,
To our awful rites repair.
From Almainia's haunted woods,
From her hallowed founts and floods,
Hasten to these isles, and shed
Glory on the victim's head.
From those eastern climes where flowers,
Bright as gems, emboss the bowers ;
Where the virgin daffodil
O'er the gentle-speaking rill
Hangs its bells of golden dyes,
Weeping till the sun doth rise,
And its crimson wreath the rose
Flings o'er Indian maid's repose ;
Where the orange breathes perfume,
And the plantain yields its bloom,
With its fragrant fruit and wine
Richer than the grapy vine,
Mid whose leaves the impurpled dove
Tells her tale of endless love ;

Where the date-tree's colonnade
O'er the water casts its shade,
Which, in silence as it flows,
Seems the spirit of repose,—
And, as falls the chequered gleam
On the blue and glassy stream,
Sleeps the image of that grove,
Like Beauty in the lap of Love ;
Where the sun-palm towers on high,
And rich gems, like night-stars, lie
Mid the river's golden sands,
Whence came all our warlike bands,
And that bird of gorgeous wing,
Sun-set splendours rivalling,
Gilds the twilight of the grove,
Laden with the spicy clove ;
From the pathless forest's shade,
And the fig-tree's dim arcade,
Where the Indian hunter's yell
Rouses up the leopard fell,
And the giant serpent holds
Th' fierce elk struggling in its folds,
While the frightened tiger flies
From the fire-glance of its eyes ;
Where that fiend-like creature wild,
Whose grim visage never smiled,
Dwells amid the leafy waste,
Savage thing, nor man nor beast ;
Where doth roam the lion free
In his power and majesty,
Forests trembling at the roar
Of that hunter, steeped in gore ;
From the Ganges' sacred flood,

From thy caves and rocks of blood,
Mighty SIVA ! hither come ;
Take thy willing victim home
To thy ruby halls of light,
With immortal glory bright.

Hark ! the rustling forest rings
With the sound of many wings.
See the lightnings, how they dash
O'er the skies with surge and flash ;
While the wrestling thunders roll
Onward, onward to the pole !
Lo ! the steeds which from afar
Draw the mighty SIVA's car ;
With its bright wheels fiercely driven
Down the crashing steep of heaven !

[*Dark clouds, emitting streams of fire, with deep thunder, descend, and cover the loftiest part of the rocks ; through the clouds are faintly seen strange and awful forms.*]

GRAND CHORUS.

He comes, he comes in clouds of flame !
Hail to mighty SIVA's name !
Ascend, thou child of dust, and be
Heir of immortality !

WALDIMAR—(*aside.*)

O this is terrible, for mortal flesh
To meet yon dreadful god ! I feel it now,—
For, on the dark and shadowy verge of death,
All the wild frenzy of my brain is fled,
And, like to one who wakes from troubled dreams
And finds himself and home involved in flames,

I feel reality more dreadful far
Than all my former visions !

HIGH-PRIEST.

Linger not.

Music shall sound to cheer thy upward steps,
Give thee full courage, and a hymn of triumph
Peal forth, as on thy watery bier thou sink'st
To rise again in glory.

WALDIMAR.

Strike ! strike all

Your instruments of melody, and let
These woods resound with shoutings that may fling
A burning frenzy on my soul, as thus
I rush to meet my doom !

[Shouts and loud music. Waldimar wildly ascends the rocks ; as he approaches the cloud,—Enter Elgitha ; the music suddenly ceases,—she shrieks, and rushes to the foot of the rocks.]

ELGITHA.

Hold, Waldimar, hold, for the love of Christ !
This Cross, the emblem of his death, shall chase
The fiends of blood and darkness from these shades,
And send them howling——

[Terrific and appalling sounds are heard, and the whole Scene appears wrapped in ghastly flames. Waldimar waves a last adieu to Elgitha, and leaps from the rock. The music again strikes up softly mournful, with wild and distant voices in the clouds. Elgitha advances into the centre of the groupes which stand on either side, and attempts to speak ; but overpowered, she sinks convulsively on the ground, and expires.]

SCENE II.—*The grand Hall in the Palace.**Enter Canute and Attendants.*

CANUTE.

Bring forth the prisoners.

Enter Zandagast and Ermingild, guarded.

Did we rightly hear
That ye had doomed your son to self-destruction,
A victim to your bloody gods?

ZANDAGAST.

Thou didst :
And he, ere this, his mother's holy vow
Hath, like a true-born son of our brave race,
Nobly performed.

CANUTE.

So hasty in your guilt !
The deeper be your punishment. We look
With horror on you both. Ye've done a deed
So fearfully inhuman, that to us
Like ruthless fiends ye seem who have assumed
A mortal shape, that ye might on our realms
Bring down a heavy curse.

ERMINGILD.

A blessing rather.

CANUTE.

Thou monster in the form of woman, peace !

ERMINGILD.

Why should I hold my peace, when I have done
Nought, save what well behaved me?—Paid the gods
A debt of grateful honour, long their due,
And conquering all a mother's fondness, given

An only son, in yonder skies to be
Their bright companion.

CANUTE.

Thou that son hast given
Dark fellowship to hold with damned fiends !
And of the greatest crime art self-accused,
That woman can commit.

ERMINGILD.

Crime ! lofty King ?
If in thine eyes a crime it be, then learn
I glory in the deed ! and were I now
With mine own people, I should hear their shouts
Proclaiming me the first of Wendish mothers,
The harps of minstrels with my fame would ring,
And a great nation's homage on me wait.
And shall I hang my head in shame, because
Thy ignorance brands me for an act which I
Count as my highest glory ? No, bring forth
Thy Christian tortures ; I will brave them all,
And tell thee 'tis my last, my greatest pride,
To die a martyr for Slavonia's faith.

ZANDAGAST.

Our lives, O King, are in thy power, but we
Heed not the threatening of thy stormy wrath.
The faith our fathers died in, and the gods
They served, are ours ; and never shall this knee
In homage bow to him, the crucified,
Whom for your God ye worship.

CANUTE—(*stabbing* Zandagast.)

Die thou, then,
Blaspheming homicide, fanatic rebel
To God and to our laws!

ZANDAGAST.

A joyful death.

My son ! my son ! wait on thy midnight cloud
For me, thy father. See ! his shadowy form
In brightness comes. Give me, give me thy hand—
Dear Ermingild, thou wilt not stay behind ?
I've lost thee now, sweet Waldimar, and all—
Is—utter darkness—

[Dies.]

ERMINGILD.

Tarry behind ? No, blessed martyr, thus
I bravely follow thee. [Attempts to stab herself.]

CANUTE.

Disarm her quick !

Too much of blood hath been already spilt,
And I repent my fury spared him not.

[The Guards wrest the dagger from Ermingild.]

ERMINGILD.

A fair reward, most Christian king, for all
His long-tried valour,—never wanting found
His faithful services in field and council !
Mark ye, who there behold yon soldier lie
Welt'ring in his warm life-blood, this—ay, this
Is Christian gratitude and Christian meekness,—
Ye who, with bloody zeal and murder, boast
A creed all love, all mercy, all forgiveness
To the most deadly foe ! Now, tyrant, call
Thy fell tormentors in : I long to die,
And since, beyond a certain point, frail nature
Must cease to endure, the more severe my pangs
The speedier my release.

CANUTE.

No : thou shalt find
That we, in cooler moments, can perform

A Christian's brightest duties. We to Heaven
Leave thy just punishment, but will ourselves
Before the judgment-seat of truth arraign
For this rash deed of blood, and pay a mulct
Meet to our high titles and offence.

ERMINGILD.

I reckon not aught thou dost,—yet would I crave
A simple boon. It is, thy leave to raise
A funeral pile, bright as the immortal fame
Of Zandagast, that I to him may pay
All those last noble rites, with which my nation
Honour the brave who for their country die.

CANUTE.

All, save the inhuman sacrifice of slaves.
Soldiers, bear hence yon warrior on your shields,
And heedfully obey her will.

[The Guards bear off the body of Zandagast.]

ERMINGILD.

Enough.

One sacrifice to my departed lord,
At least, shall not be in thy power to let.
A lofty pyre I'll raise, and on it fling
Spices and fragrant oils, with shield and helm,
Banner and trophy, and those stores of wealth
We in this land have gathered; then amidst
The sheeted flames I'll cast myself, and clasp
Thy corse, my Zandagast, in these glad arms,
Die, as I've ever lived, thy faithful wife,
And meet thee, with my son, in fadeless glory.

[Exit.]

CANUTE.

Call hither all my officers and guards.

*Enter Rolf Iric, Turkeetul, Ulfmando, Earls,
and the Thinga-manna.* ⁽³⁵⁾

Soldiers and Thanes, in me you now behold
A criminal, who his own laws hath broken ;
For, drunk with passion, I have rashly stabbed
A brave man and a friend,—a warrior who
Had gloried in my service to have died,
Whose obstinate belief in the strange gods
Of his forefathers was his only fault ;
A venial error,—for be well informed
(Too late in *my* remembrance) that, till taught,
Divinely taught, man must believe those lessons
Which he from education early learns,
However false her creed.—

Now ye, my lords, ascend yon judgment-seat.
Of you, do we our punishment demand ;
And 'tis our will that ye as freely speak,
As if the lowest serf before you stood,
While on the ground in penitence we kneel,
Hoping for Heaven's forgiveness, but not yours.

ULFMANDO.

O rise, thou lord of many kingdoms, rise.

ROLF IRIC.

He was thy vassal, and the lives of all
That owe thee homage——

CANUTE.

By the laws of God
And of the sovereign must be sacred held.
Who shall the laws respect, if we that are
Their maker break them ?

ROLF IRIC.

But if one so great
In passionate mood——

CANUTE.

No flattery now. That judge
Who fawns upon a culprit, or in aught
Seeks to extenuate his rank offence,
Because he stands pre-eminent in power,
Is most unworthy of the judgment-seat,
And basely mars his office. I demand
Your sentence on my crime.

*[The Chiefs ascend the tribunal, and confer
with each other.]*

O, this foul deed
Bedims my glory. All men's eyes will turn
To gaze upon my darkness, as they look
In fear and wonder on the noon-day sun,
When o'er his splendour shadows deep and strange
Fall, till his beams expire, till earth and heaven
Seem with him sinking to eternal night.
But from this gloom my onward course I'll win,
And yet again break forth in cloudless lustre.

ULFMANDO.

My royal lord, it is our will that thou
Pass sentence on thyself.

CANUTE.

Ye know the law :—
He who hath slain another, is amerced
In forty golden talents. In our judgment,
The mightier he who dares the law offend,
The deeper his offence ; and, since it is
Your will that from our lips the sentence fall,
We, as the crowned head of all the land,
Who have transgressed, amerce ourselves in twice
Two hundred talents of the purest gold.

THE SOLDIERS.

Noble Canute ! Long live Canute the Great !

ULFMANDO.

The spousal rites
Of your new favourite, Godwin, with my sister,
Wait for the honoured presence of your Highness.

CANUTE.

We are unmindful in our many cares.
A cause thou wot'st not of, requires that we
Their bridal should attend.—Come, let us meet them.
[*Exeunt King, Earls, &c.*

TURKEETUL.

What self-deceivers are the wisest of us !
The King condemns himself for having slain
In moody passion one brave man, and wins
By such remorse a host of good opinions ;
Yet, in cold blood, prepares t' unsheathe his sword
That he may slaughter thousands, and commit
Unnumbered robberies ! Then, when he hath done
These bloody feats, where will be his remorse ?
O, he will glory in it, and expect
The world's applause and worship. Would this King
Laugh, as I do, at care the night away
O'er jovial wine-cups, he would shortly be
A better man, and spend an easy life,
Gay as the summer lark's, nor ever feel
Ambition's endless plagues. But out upon 't !
Who is there will not follow the strong bent
Of his own passions, though they lead to ruin ?
Not I, for one.—A brimming cup's the thing
That makes a beggar happier than a king.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Interior of Winchester Cathedral, splendidly illuminated. The Bishop is discovered, surrounded by his clerical officers, standing near the high-altar, which is richly ornamented with gold and silver plate, wax tapers, images, &c. Sprightly music,—Organ.*

Enter, on one side, Godwin, leading Celtina, followed by Ulfmaundo and the bridal train in long procession. Enter, on the other side, Canute, leading Edith, dressed in royal robes and veiled, Pages supporting her train, followed by Evora, and Ladies of the court, Rolf Iric, Turkeetul, Attendants, and Guards, closing the processional crowd.

BISHOP.

Bring forth the bridal crowns.

[Crowns brought, enwreathed with flowers.]

CANUTE.

Godwin, bethink thee, ere those vows are made
Which may not be recalled, if on thee hang
The shackles of no former plighted faith
To some forsaken maid, whose once-loved beauty
Woke passion in thy bosom.

GODWIN—(*confused.*)

I—my lord—

I know not one who hath a claim—a right
To hinder—or forbid——

EDITH—(*flinging aside her veil.*)

What ! not poor Edith ?

GODWIN.

Ha ! some unearthly being hath assumed
That form to blast me !

EDITH.

And hast thou so soon,
Amid the noisy stir and pomp of courts,
Remembrance lost of that wild orphan maid,
Thy playmate of the desert? she who wandered
With thee, when grown to manhood, in the shades
Of Coitmaur's forest, ⁽³⁶⁾ where thy young heart breathed
Such ardent vows of everlasting fondness,
Wishing all evil things on thee might fall
If thou didst her forsake? And am not I
That forest-maid, that Edith, whom thou once
Didst love, or feigned to love, so very dearly?

GODWIN.

But thus attended,—thus in regal state!
My senses are bewildered! This indeed
Must be some dream, more wild than any yet
My fancy hath imagined,—
For real it cannot be. Full surely thou
With fairy spirits dost communion hold,
And they have o'er thee cast this bright illusion.

EDITH.

'Tis real all,—and though my dreams were not,
Like thine, of courtly splendours, yet am I
No more a peasant-maid, but play the part
To which by princely birth I am entitled.
Said I not, Godwin, we once more should meet,
And deep regret be thine? Yes, we *have* met,
And here I come in bridal robes to claim
A spouse, whom I this happy night will wed
Before the assembled court.

GODWIN.

I own, indeed——

CANUTE.

What dost thou own, proud slave? That thou hast dared
To seek this lady's love, to plight thy troth,
And win her fond affection? Then, when raised
From abject drudgery by our smiles, to cast
In scorn her beauty from thee? We have flung
Nobility on a desertless clod,
Like sunbeams on a dunghill.

GODWIN.

Good my lord,

I scorned her not——

CANUTE.

Base, lying earthworm! thou
Hast on her virtue cast disgraceful insult;
Refused that maid of beauty, whom even kings
Might fondly sigh for, and be proud to win:
Ay, peasant-groom, refused the hand of Edith,
Our well-beloved cousin.

GODWIN—(*aside.*)

Witchcraft and fiends,
It cannot be!—and yet the rosy light
Shines not more clearly from the morning's eyelids.
O, what an irrepleviable dull ass,
A brainless, moonstruck idiot have I been!

ULFMANDO.

The saints forbid thou, faithless man, shouldst be
My sister's bridegroom. Let my lord the King
Forefend the marriage rites.

EVORA.

O, I shall die
If I speak not. Now, save thy worship's reverence,
My lord of Selwood hogs, said I aright,
When I foretold thee what a glorious fool

Thy scornful pride would make thee, in despite
Thy devilish craft? Ay, marry, did I,
As to thy cost thou find'st.

GODWIN—(*aside.*)

How I could curse thee!
Yet still more bitterly revile myself.

EVORA.

Th' illustrious swineherd might not stoop, forsooth,
To wed the humble Edith, who could boast
No higher lineage than the King's own blood;
Counting her worth and beauty, weighed i' th' scale
With his most noble person and deserts,
Light as a feather poised 'gainst Dunmore hill!
A peasant and a princess are no match
All must allow; so meet it were they part.
How we have crucified, vain-glorious dolt,
Thy base and beggarly pride! and now, in sooth,
My mirth is measureless as thy disgrace.

EDITH.

Shame! shame! Evora; take not on thee thus
To insult the greatly fallen. I do perceive
In thy sad face true sorrow and remorse,
For thy unfeeling cruelty to one
Who gave thee all her heart, who on thy smiles
Hung like the flower that gazes on the sun,
And weeps when he departeth,—one who felt
At thy unkindness all the soul below
Can feel of hopeless misery,—felt how changed
Her state, full sudden, from an Eden filled
With blooming roses of delight and love,
As by an earthquake, to a scene where all
Is death and desolation! But 'tis past:—
And now this world hath not for me a flower,

Or gleam of happy sunlight. I mark well
Thy deep contrition, and forgive thee—ay,
Forgive thee freely ; for 'tis meet, since I
Shall never more on earth thy face behold,
That we part not in anger.

GODWIN.

At thy feet

Thus low I fall, o'erwhelmed with shame and grief ;
For I a vile apostate from the faith
I owe to thee have been, while thy forgiveness,
Which I could neither ask nor hope to win,
Sinks me far deeper in my own contempt
Than could thy proudest scorn. O, if thine eye
Might on me with its former brightness shine—
But I have sinned against all hope that thou
Canst love me yet again.

EDITH.

Take, the last time,

This hand, as an assurance of my pardon.
Light lie reproach hereafter on thee, Godwin,
For thy disdain of me. Speak not of love :
My love hath perished like an early flower
Beneath the breath of winter ; from its grave
It cannot spring again. And yet the hour
Is come, in which I must be made a bride
And wear a crown,—but not of earthly gems.

GODWIN.

Be who he may that shall this hand receive,
Which, were I worthy, I would not again
For kingdoms barter, may he ever love
As I did love thee in my better days,
Ere curst Ambition o'er my virtue cowered,
Like a dark giant incubus of hell,

Blasting its energies ! O, may all blessings,
Bright as those eyes and heavenly as thy beauty,
Be on thy head !

EDITH.

His love, whose bride this night
I shall be made, will never change like thine ;
And if I faithful prove, I must be blest
Beyond all mortal joy.

GODWIN.

I dare not stay
To see thy beauty to another given :
That beauty which was mine in those blest days,
When we through Coitmaur's music-breathing groves
Together roamed, where all was peace and love.
O, could those happy hours once more return,
And I again be Selwood's forest-boy !
If here I longer tarry, I shall curse
Thy splendid spousals, call the fiends to wrap
In sheeted flames——But who is he shall dare
To pluck thee from these arms ? I'll rend the heart
From out the proudest bosom that beats here,
Ere I will yield thee up.

EDITH.

For mercy, cease,
Or thou, alas ! wilt on thy soul bring down
The death of deaths ! Nay, Godwin, be thou calm.

GODWIN.

That voice could once the wildest tempest calm
Of my fierce spirit ; but to know that I
No more must listen to its gentle tones,
That on some rival's ear its blessed music
Shall unregarded fall, doth make me feel

The torments of the damned, when they behold
The blissful bowers of heaven for ever lost !

EDITH.

Mistaken youth ! the bridegroom I have chosen
Is not of earth,—for I this night shall be
The veiled spouse of Christ. Take, ere I go,
My last kind counsel. Cherish those fair virtues
Which in thy heart a struggling lustre shed
Amid the dark cold shade of stormy passions,
Like wandering sunbeams in the forest lost.
Hope flings her rainbow light of gladness through
The long-drawn vista of succeeding years,
Which false ambition fills with scenes of pomp.
But mark me, and beware ! If once thou tread
That star-bright track of glory, at its close
Darkness and horrid shadows thou shalt meet !
Remember my last words, and peace be with thee !
Now, then, farewell to all ! Farewell, vain world,
Heaven in its distant splendour on me dawns !

[*A solemn Offertorie on the organ. Enter a train of Nuns from the aisles of the cathedral, led by the Lady Abbess ; who takes the hand of Edith, and conducts her during the chorus to the altar. Godwin follows a few steps, and then falls, overpowered by his feelings, on the ground.*

GRAND CHORUS.

Lovely votress, child of Heaven,
All thy sins are now forgiven.
Safely hast thou reached the shore
Of that happy land of rest,
Where the storms of life no more
Shall thy sacred peace molest.

Not the proudest regal maid,
In transcendent pomp arrayed,
By her kingly bridegroom led
To his golden-curtained bed,
May in glory rival thee,
Made the bride of Deity !
Earth no more shall thee betray,
Its proud pageants fade away
In Religion's purer light,
As the stars that die with night.
Youth in all its charms expires,
Love dies in its own desires ;
But the fervour of *our* hearts
Burns more bright as life departs,
And angel visions all divine,
On our broken slumbers shine.
Safely hast thou reached the shore
Of that happy land of rest,
Where the storms of life no more
Shall thy sacred peace molest.

NOTES.

- (¹) *I'll put two straws
To-night across the threshold. . . . p. 119.*

"Straws dissolve enchantments."—*The Havamaal, or the Sublime Discourse of Odin.*

- (²) *A queen shall be thy daughter, England's queen. . . .
More seek not thou to know. Mysterious words! p. 119.*

Wonderful instances are recorded of the truth of the predictions of the Haruspices among the Romans, who consulted the entrails of the victims offered in sacrifice.—Vide Livy, Sallust, Jus., Tacit., Luct., Galb., Suet., Cæs., Dio., and others.

Apollonius Thyaneus, a Pythagorean philosopher, well skilled in the secret arts of magic, as he was one day haranguing the populace of Ephesus, suddenly exclaimed, "Strike the tyrant! strike him! The blow is given, he is wounded, he is fallen!" At that very moment, the Emperor Domitian was stabbed at Rome.

Seneca prophesied of the discovery of America. There will come a time, says he, in future ages, when the immense ocean will relax his boundaries, and the mighty earth will lie open; when Typhis (Columbus?) shall discover a NEW WORLD, and Thule shall no longer be accounted the end of the earth.

"An astrologer at Paris, long before the Restoration, foretold King Charles that he should enter London on the 29th of May, 1660."—*Burnet's Hist. of his own Times.*

Solomon Eagle predicted the plague in 1665, as a judgment, running about the streets of London stark naked day and night, and crying, "O the great and the dreadful God!"

"An unknown person," says Bishop Burnet, "put a paper in the old Princess's hands, (the mother of King William III.) which she took from him, thinking it was a petition; when she looked into it, she found it was her son's nativity, together with the fortunes of his life, and a full deduction of many accidents, which followed *very punctually, as they were predicted.*"

"Prince Poniatowski, a few years previous to his death, when on a visit to a relation in Moravia, and while sauntering in the park of the Château with some ladies, was suddenly

accosted by a gipsy, who offered to predict the fate of every one present. Poniatowski held out his hand to the sybil, who took it, and, examining it with a scrutinizing glance, said in a hollow voice, "Prince, an Elster will be thy death!" Now Elster, in German, means a magpie. The prediction, therefore, elicited a burst of merriment from the whole party, who little dreamt, at the time, how truly this gipsy prophecy would be one day realized. The gallant Pole sunk with his steed, and hundreds of the flying French, in the waters of the Elster."—*Month. Mag.*

(3) . *Art thou the brother of a Duke?* . . . p. 129.

Godwin, the father of Harold, the last of the Anglo-Saxon kings, was brought up a herdsman. Mr. Sharon Turner, from the *Knytlinga*, gives the story nearly similar to what may be found in the text. The Danish chieftain whom he preserved, in gratitude gave him his sister in marriage. "Godwin," says the above author, "possessed a power little less than sovereign for three reigns. That he was the son of a herdsman, is a fact recorded in the MS. Chronicle of Radulphus Niger." That Wulfnoth, the father of Godwin, was at one period a chieftain, is stated by the above authority, for he is called Childe of Sussex. The infamous Edric seems to have been his uncle, but we have made him to be his brother.

(4) *The mystic name. . . .*

Is on my forehead, and it must not be

Effaced till Death's pale hand shall wash it thence. p. 138.

"This word was O. M., or A. U. M. in its trilateral form, (vide *Asiat. Res.* v. i., p. 285.) It represented the creative, the preserving, and destroying power of the Omnipotent, personified in Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva."—*Wilkins' Bhagvat Geeta.*

"All the rites ordained in the Vedas, the sacrifices to the fire, and all other solemn purifications, shall pass away; but that which shall never pass away is the word O. M., for it is the symbol of the Lord of all things."—*Abbé Du Bois.*

"An intelligent Brahmin, who had come from Hydrabad, informed me that the temple of Visvacarma was dedicated to the Supreme Being; and, on pronouncing the mystical trilateral word of A. U. M. in silence, he made three low reverences, with a cloth over his mouth. I afterwards showed these mystical characters to him, and he admitted they were the sacred syllable he had used, but on no account would he repeat them aloud. Each letter mystically signifies the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer."—*Wonders of Elora.*

“The audible pronunciation of this awful word was believed to cause the earth to tremble, and all the inhabitants of heaven to quake with fear.”—*History of Initiation*.

“Nor print any mark upon you.” It was a custom amongst some idolatrous nations, when solemnly devoting themselves to the service of any deity, to be initiated into it by receiving some marks in their flesh which might never wear out.—*Burder's Orient. Cust.*

“Subscribe with the hand.” This is an allusion to the marks which were made by punctures, rendered indelible by fire, or by staining upon the hand or some other part of the body, signifying the state or character of the person, and to whom he belonged. The slave was marked with the name of his master; the soldier with that of his commander; the *idolater* with the name or sign of his god. And the Christians seem to have imitated this practice, by what Procopius says upon this passage of Isaiah: “Many marked their wrists or their arms with the sign of the Cross, or with the name of Christ.”—*Lowth*.

The sign of the Cross has ever been a sacred symbol among heathens as well as Christians.

There has lately been opened near Wareham, in Dorsetshire, a tumulus, or barrow, containing from twenty to thirty urns, all of which are rudely formed, and of high antiquity. On the bottom of one of these urns, in our possession, is the form of a *Cross*, partly grooved and partly raised. This is the first urn that has ever been found with this religious emblem marked upon it in England, or, we believe, in any other country.

This symbol, found in the gorgeous temples of India, and on a rude urn in the simple tomb of a British chief, must have been originally derived from that eastern fountain of knowledge, of which Plato, in his divine philosophy, drank so deeply; who says, in his *Timæus*, that the Son of God was displayed on the universe in the form of an X.—*Just. Mar. sec. lxxvii*.

In the splendid saloon at the British Museum, appropriated to the antiquities of Egypt, may be seen numerous figures holding in their hands *cruces ansatas*, or crosses with rings, the emblem of, and the passport to, eternal life.

We will instance No. 41, a statue of Diana Bubastes, on which are sculptured the lunar boat, the serpent, and the lotus, all of which are emblems of the *Yavana*, the *Yoni*, or *Pith*; which proves, beyond contradiction, that the ancient Indo-Egyptians were, in their worship, Pish-de-danaans; that Diana Bubastes is the Indian Padma-devi, or the goddess sitting on the lotus; and that the great pyramid of Egypt, as the Brahmins told Wilford, was a temple dedicated to the worship of Padma-devi.

The Padma-mandira, or town of Byblos, in Egypt, on the banks of the Calè, or Nile, (see *Asiatic Researches*,) was a pyramid of earth precisely resembling Selbury Mount, at Abury. The temple at Abury, we are now convinced, is of the very highest antiquity, and must have been erected previous to the bloody dissension which took place so many ages ago between the two sects, the Pish-de-danaans and the Tuath-de-danaans, respecting the male and female organs of primogenitiveness: the Tuath-de-danaans being the votaries of the former, and the Pish-de-danaans of the latter. We say previous to this dissension, because the form of Abury embraces both principles, and was dedicated to Budha, Toth, or Lingam, one and the same in emblem and identity, personified in its lofty obelisk erected in the centre of one of its inner circles,—the very Lingam of India in the Yoni, Pith, or Pish; and also to Devi, the Goddess of Desire, or, allegorically, the power of God exerted in creating, preserving, and renovating the universe, (see *Sir William Jones*,) personified in its serpentine form, the symbol of the Pith, and in Selbury Mount, or the Padma-mandira, with its neighbouring lake of water,—that element being always used in the mysteries of this worship. We have not room to enlarge on this subject further than to observe, that the religion of both these sects, once united, and as ancient as the creation of man, was far from tending to any thing lascivious, for it embraced the grand fundamental doctrines of Christianity: namely, that a divine Redeemer should be born of a Virgin, restore mankind to eternal life, and die the death of the Cross for the sins of the world. These were the leading truths exhibited by scenic representations in the ancient Mysteries, as we shall prove in a Note or Dissertation affixed to the last of these Tragedies in the present volume.

The Cross, then, being in all ages an emblem of eternal life, what sign or symbol could be more beautiful and appropriate with which to mark the urn that contained the ashes of the once-mighty warrior,—the crumbling and dusty relics of him who for battle-deeds was long remembered in the inspiring war-songs of the bards, in the hall of shields, at the banquet of the brave? clearly pointing out that his spirit should survive beyond the ruins of the tomb, and dwell, according to the Celtic belief, in “the islands of the brave and virtuous;” where Paradise was renewed in all its primitive beauty and splendour, and where its inhabitants, amid bowers of unfading verdure and bloom, were blest with eternal joy and never-dying youth.

The Cross on the urn fully proves that the Druids did, according to ancient authors, believe in a state of hereafter rewards and punishments, as well as in the future dissolution of this world by fire, and in the resurrection of the dead.

- (5) *By the Velibogc,
Our gods of brightness. p. 143.*

Hôfprediger Masch asserts, that among the Slavi, Velibogc was the name applied to the beneficent, or *white* divinities whom they worshipped.

- (6) *Of whom a troop will fly before the lance
Of one Sclavonian soldier. p. 143.*

Lupus, an Anglo-Saxon bishop cotemporary with Ethelred the Unready, says, in one of his Sermons, speaking of the Danes, "Two or three will always drive a troop of captive *Christians* through the country, from sea to sea. This also clearly intimates, that the Danes at this period still remained pagans, at least the greatest portion of them.

- (7) *When, in merry mood,
Thou lift'st the wine-cup in the hall of shields,
Drink deep to Christ and all the blessed saints. . p. 143.*

Malmesbury says, that the Anglo-Saxons and Danes were addicted to excessive drinking, spending whole days and nights in riot and debauchery; and that they used to swallow large draughts to Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, and the Saints.

That the custom of drinking healths is of high antiquity among the northern and eastern nations, may be easily proved. When the ambassadors of Theodosius visited the camp of Attila, "Maximin and his colleagues were stopped on the threshold, till they had made a devout libation to the health and prosperity of the King of the Huns. . . . The barbarian monarch received from his cup-bearer a goblet filled with wine, and courteously drank to the health of the most distinguished guest, who rose from his seat, and expressed, in the same manner, his loyal and respectful vows. This ceremony was performed for all, or at least for the illustrious persons of the assembly."

How nearly are allied the manners of our *public* meetings in the present day, to those of the wild Huns of Tartary in the fifth century!

- (8) *He delegates the rule of all below
To his celestial offspring. p. 144.*

The German historians assert, and Procopius confirms it, that the Sclavonic tribes, although they worshipped inferior gods, believed in the existence of one supreme Deity. Holmoldus, in his *Chronica Sclavorum*, published at Lubeck in 1702, says, "Among the various deities whom they believed to

preside over fields and woods, over pleasure and pain, they acknowledged one Almighty God, who dwelt in heaven and ruled over all, employing himself only in heavenly things. The other gods they believed had separate offices ; they were the offspring of the Almighty, and the nearer they approached to the God of gods, the more were they to be revered."

(9) *We to these gods, high councillors of splendour.* . p. 144.

One of the names of the Slavonic god Radegast, was Slavaradage, which is said, in the Windish language, to signify a councillor of glory.

(10) *For I would have my Danish subjects Christians.* . p. 144.

"Though the generality of the Danes, at this period, were either pagans, or only a kind of half Christians, their king, Canute, who became also King of England in 1017, was a zealous Christian, according to the mode of the age in which he lived."—*Dr. Henry's Hist. of Great Brit.*

In Canute's ecclesiastical laws is the following ordinance:—"We strictly prohibit all heathenism : the worship of idols, the sun, the moon, fire, rivers, fountains, rocks, trees of any kind, and the practice of witchcraft, or committing murder by magic, or firebrands, or any other infernal devices."—*Spel. Concil.* To what did the murder by firebrands allude ? Had it not a similarity to an Indian superstition ? When a Hindoo is determined to seek a deadly but private revenge on an enemy, he seizes the half-burnt stake to which a widow has been fastened on the funeral pile of her husband : conveying it home, he sets it up and strikes it with some weapon, pronouncing the name of his foe, who from that moment is supposed gradually to perish.

(11) *Not all the Christian priests that own thy power,
Shall win me to forsake my father's gods.* . p. 144.

According to Jornandes, the Venedi, the Slavi, and the Antes, were tribes of the same people, who joined the Goths at their first irruption from the Ukraine into Dacia and Mæsia. So great, at one period, were the conquests of the Slavonians, that their language has been even extended from the Adriatic to the confines of Japan. Such was the obstinacy with which these Slavonic tribes adhered to their superstitions, that the arms of the Teutonic knights were for a long time employed in the attempt to exterminate idolatry. The ancient customs of the Slavi, together with their national independence, were pre-

served to a later period in Mecklenburg than in any other part of Germany; and it is said that country derives its present name from the Mickli, an order of priests among the idolatrous Wends. In some districts of Lunenburg, remains of the Obotrites, another tribe of the Slavoni, were preserved till a late period.

“Even so late as the year 1306, in the woods of Lunenburg, some wild people of the Vined race (the Winedæ of the Slavonians, no doubt) were allowed to bury alive their infirm and useless parents.”—*Gibbon*. The Aborigines of America dispatch, as they imagine in mercy, the old and infirm among their tribes.—See *Dr. Robertson's Hist. Amer.*

- (12) *But much I marvel pious bishops should
Make nobles drunk, to cheat them of their wealth,
Whereby t'enrich themselves. . . p. 145.*

“In the reign of Canute, Ætheric, a bishop of Dorchester, made a Danish nobleman drunk, and then won him over to sell a fine estate, which the bishop purchased with a very trifling sum of money. For this dexterous trick he is lauded to the skies by monkish writers, having made a present of the estate to the Abbey of Ramsey.”—*Hist. Eliens.* p. 458.

- (13) *He is, my lord, as thou wouldst have him be,
A lifeless piece of clay. . . p. 146.*

“Dr. Henry says that Edmund was murdered a few days after the division of the kingdom between him and Canute. The Knytlinga Saga and Saxo carry up the crime as high as Canute. They expressly state that Edric was corrupted by Canute to assassinate Edmund.”—*Anglo-Saxons*, vol. ii. p. 492.

- (14) *By my war-bracelet! I protest my heart
Goes not with these dark doings. . . p. 148.*

An oath of purgation among the Danes.

- (15) *To Czerneboch, the Black and Evil One,
King of the land of Darkness. . . p. 158.*

“Well known as this god is in the history of the Wends,” says Masch in his description of the discovery of the Slavonian gods near the town of Prilwitz, in Mecklenburg, on the north side of a mountain on the shores of the lake of Tollentz, by a village pastor, near the close of the seventeenth century, when digging away a part of a bank in his garden for the purpose of

planting trees, "yet no description of his figure was found before the discovery of these antiquities." His name is differently written Czernebouck, Czernbog, Czerneboch, Tschenebogc, all of them signifying the black or evil principle. The figure represents a furious lion, with his name on his back, "who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Zernebog, or Zernebogus, was the black or evil spirit among the Saxon tribes.

- (16) *Thou, to the death-song of our priests, shouldst cast
Thyself from Siva's rock amid the waves
Of the deep-rolling Ister. . . p. 159.*

It may be startling to many readers to meet, on English ground, the horrible Indian superstition of devoting children from their birth to Siva or Māhā Deo. We have, in the notes to the *Dragon-King*, (first series of these Tragedies,) shown that our forefathers, the Saxons, had among them the Indian custom of the widows of chiefs burning themselves on the funeral pile of their deceased husbands, who considered a plurality of wives as a mark of distinction.* It cannot, therefore, be greatly wondered at, if we find other eastern rites among the Slavonians, the third barbarian inundation which poured into Europe having penetrated so far into Germany, even in the sixth century, as to enter into a war with Clothaire, king of the Franks, according to the Chronicle of Fredegarius Scholasticus, who flourished in 640.

It is allowed, that the Slavonian language bears a striking resemblance to the Sanscrit: this is one proof of their eastern origin, and of the truth of the theory of Higgins in his *Celtic Druids*. It is proved by Gatterer, that these Slavonians obtained possession of Bohemia, Moravia, Saxony, and Thuringia, in 534; and of Stiria and Pomerania between 569 and 588. Being such near neighbours to the Danes, it certainly is not overstepping the bounds of probability in supposing that a renowned warrior of the Slavonian tribes might enter the service of Swēin, or Canute, and thus pass with either of them into England; particularly as some of the Danish kings, even after their conversion to Christianity, are known to have sent presents to the heathen temples of the Wendic tribes.

We have spoken in the previous Note of the singular discovery of the Slavonian gods, an account of which has been published by several German authors. According to their relation, these gods are cast rudely in brass, with their names engraven on

* As a proof of this, Charlemagne had three or four wives, and many concubines.

them in Runic characters. The chief figure seems to be Rade-gast, of which there are in the collection five. He is represented with a human body and the head of a lion, and has the head of a bull or ox on his breast. He has also the figure of what is supposed to be a goose on his head. We rather believe this goose to be the swan of Brahma, with which he is attended in the sculptures of Elephanta, and certainly the head of the bull speaks its Indian origin. Among several others which we shall pass over, is the figure of Sieba, which Helmoldus, and other Germans, call SIVA. On the head of this figure is an ape or monkey: this seems, beyond contradiction, to prove its connexion with the Brahminical mythology. This deity had its principal temple among the Wends of Mecklenburg and Holstein. As another proof of these Slavonian gods being of Indian origin, it is now generally believed that the real Odin of the Scandinavians is the Buddha of the East; and among the figures discovered at Prilwitz, is the god Vodha, a name much nearer in sound to the Indian, than that of the Saxon and Danish god.

It appears that Siva, or Jiva, in the Slavonic language, as it does in the Sanscrit, means *life*, one of the attributes of the Destroyer. Patterson (*Asiat. Res.* v. 8. p. 48.) says, that the creative power was given by the different sects of religion to Brahma, Vishnou, and to Siva. The grand Triad of the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer, pervades the whole system of every heathen mythology, from China to Peru.

Procopius says, that the Slavonians worship One God, the maker of lightning, the sole ruler of the universe. When they are under the fear of immediate death, either by disease or from wounds received in battle, they utter vows of sacrifice to the deity for the preservation of their lives. If they survive, these vows are faithfully performed, believing their restoration has been the consequence of their votive offerings.—Vide *Procop. Cæsar de Bello Goth.* l. 3. c. 4.

“Māhā Deo, or Siva, like Saturn, delights in human sacrifices.”—*Wonders of Elora*.

“Their Prono (speaking of the Slavonians) in the middle of a thousand idols, with two or three faces, and their goddess *Seva*, both adorned with human sacrifices, seem of Hindu origin. All these idols look very much like the progeny of some of the old Asiatic superstitions.”—*Turner's Mid. Ages*.

The Tauric Diana, to whom human sacrifices were offered, was called Sæva Diana.

(17) *Art thou prepared thy mother's solemn oath
Manfully to fulfil? . . .* p. 160.

In Malwa, once a powerful kingdom of India, a mother, to

the present day, often devotes her unborn child to the hideous imagination of Ong Kar Mundattah ; and when the appointed hour arrives, the devoted one precipitates himself from the sacrificial rock Bheereallah, in the sacred island of Mundattah.

"It was also a principle of the Druids, according to Cæsar, that, for the redemption of the life of man, nothing but the life of man could be accepted by the gods. The consequence of this was, that those who implored safety from the dangers of war, or the most desperate distempers, either immediately sacrificed some human creature, or made a vow to do so soon after."—*Borlase*.

"They held, that the souls of those who suffered as victims to their gods in this life were deified, or at least translated into heaven, there to be happy ; and the remains of those who died in sacrifice were accounted most holy, and honoured before any other dead bodies."—*Rel. de Gaulis*, v. ii. p. 226.

Acosta says, that the Peruvians, notwithstanding their mildness, did sacrifice virgins ; and sometimes a son would be sacrificed for the life of a father."—*Hist. Ind.* p. 380.

"The ancient inhabitants of the north believed that the term of a man's life might be prolonged, if any one would put himself in his place, and die in his stead. This was often practised, when a prince or illustrious warrior was ready to perish by some accident."—*North. Antiq.*

"At this time there lived in the island of Lefooga a female, who for many years had been afflicted with insanity. She had become insane in consequence of excessive grief, partly occasioned by the death of a near relation, but principally by her child having been taken from her to be strangled, as an offering to the gods for the recovery of his sick father."—*Tonga Islands*.

That many of the ancient priests who offered human sacrifices were cannibals, there can be little or no doubt ; for in the Psalms it is said, "And they ate of the sacrifices of the dead." That this is the true meaning of the passage is clearly evident, from the following verses in the Wisdom of Solomon :—

"Whom thou hatest for doing most odious works of witchcraft and wicked sacrifices.

"And also those merciless murderers of children, and devourers of men's flesh, and the feasts of blood, with them out of the midst of their idolatrous crew, and the parents that killed with their own hands souls destitute of help."

"So late as the funeral of Rollo, founder of the Norman dukedom in France, the gifts to monasteries for the repose of his soul were accompanied by the sacrifice of one hundred captives."—*Gibbon*.

- (18) *And round the May-pole, with its flower-sheaves crowned,
Maidens and youths will dance in frolic glee. . . p. 161.*

This festival (*Asiatic Researches*, v. 11.) is celebrated in India on the first of May, in honour of Bhavani. A May-pole is erected hung with garlands, around which the young people dance precisely the same as in England.

"On May-day Eve, the Druids made prodigious fires on these cairns, which, being every one in sight of each other, could not but afford a glorious show over the whole nation."—*Toland's Hist. Dru.*

"Round these fires choral dances were performed. . . . The festival was *phallic*, in honour of the Sun, the great source of generation, and consisted in the elevation of phalli, or *long poles*, decorated with crowns of gold and flowers, under which both sexes performed certain mysterious revolutions."—*History of Initiation.*

- (19) *High festival to hold on Vadha's rock,
In Rimmon's gloomy woods. p. 161.*

We have said before, that Vodah, Buddha, Boodh, and the god (not the warrior) Odin, were one and the same; and Davies, in his *Mythology of the Druids*, says the great God was considered by the Welch as the dispenser of good, and is also called Buddwas. "The probability is, that the world has been peopled or conquered by nations of the North of Asia, who have extended themselves into all parts, east, west, and south. (*Baillie's Let. to Voltaire.*) This is perfectly just, and is the only mode by which the wonderful similarity between the Druids and the oriental nations can be satisfactorily accounted for."—*Celtic Druids.*

In the Isle of Purbeck, still rich in druidical remains, are two places called Remp-stone or Rem-stone. That this is also an abbreviation of Rimmon's-stone, we have no hesitation in asserting. At the Remp-stone, on the western side of the Isle of Purbeck, was a druidical circle, three or four of the rock pillars of which remaining on the spot till within a few years past. One still remains as the post of a gate, deeply impressed with the marks of its high antiquity; the others have been barbarously broken up, for the purpose of making a small bridge. That this *was* a temple, is evident from the barrows which still surround the once-venerated spot,—it being the custom of the Britons to bury, at least their great men, within sight of their sacred enclosures; from which has been derived our interments in church-yards, *both* connected with the divine belief of the immortality of the soul. St. Stephen, in his argument with

the Jews, speaks of the god Rimmon : " Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan ; figures which ye made to worship them ; " alluding to the tabernacle of the sun and the planets. Moloch, in Irish, is fire, a type of the sun, as the sun was a visible type of the invisible God, and Remphan, or Rimmon, signified the inferior planets. Again, this Remphan is called Chiun by Amos, (c. v. v. 26,) " Ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves." Rimmon was the Syrian name, and Chiun the name given by the Moabites to the same deities. I have therefore no doubt, that the circle of Rempstone, in Purbeck, was dedicated to the stars, or Rimmon. In the same island, is Aggle-stone, an immense rock, erected on a mount or high-place : this was the stone of the sun,—a lithos, sometimes called a cromleach, which Toland explains from the Irish *crom*, to adore, and *leac*, stone—stone of adoration. Borlase says, that in the Western Isles some remains of adoration are still paid to such stones : " As it seems to me, they call them *bowing-stones*, from the reverence shown them : for the *Even Maschith*, which the Jews were forbidden to worship, signifies really a bowing-stone, and was doubtless so called because worshipped by the Canaanites." Round these stones many of the Gaelic islanders still perform the Deisol, as they also do round holy wells and fountains.

(20) *Immortal fame on earth? The earth forbids it,
For daily she to dissolution tends. . . .* p. 172.

This knowledge of the expected dissolution of the earth, might have come to the Saxons from the legends of their pagan forefathers, for it is to be found in the *Edda*, the greater portion of which bears internal evidence of its eastern origin, and perfectly accords with the philosophy of India and Egypt ; the reflection of which may be found in Lucretius, Lucan, and Ovid. In Scipio's dream, the old man, showing his nephew the globe from the clouds, tells him, that however great or fortunate our actions may be, there can be no lasting glory in this world ; seeing that, after a certain period, it must be destroyed, either by water or fire, which would sweep away all human records.

Indeed, the expectation of the dissolution of the earth was so great about the middle of the tenth century, and which still continued to the commencement of the Crusades, that the churches and other edifices were suffered to fall into utter decay. Jerusalem, it was supposed, would be the spot of our Saviour's re-appearance on earth ; and multitudes of all ranks,

and both sexes, as the period predicted more nearly approached, resorted thither in order to await the final consummation. Vaisette, in *L'Histoire de Languedoc*, has preserved a French charter, which begins with—"Approinquante mundi termino," &c. Houses and lands were given up, as of little or no value, and the whole of Christendom appeared running mad. The Princess Anna Comnena might well say, "All Europe, torn up from its foundations, seemed ready to precipitate itself on Asia in one united mass."

In the *History of the Middle Ages* may be found v. v. p. 125, an analysis of *La Nobla Leyczon*, a poem of the Vaudois, written in 1100; and it begins with stating, that the end of the world was then approaching.

(²¹) *I'll have thy tongue cut out. Such is the law
For false and slanderous railers. . . . p. 175.*

Leges Sax. This old law was confirmed by Canute.

(²²) *This joyous night,
Gay Summer's festival, the woods will ring
With harp and timbrel. . . . p. 186.*

Of the long continuance of these Baal-fires, and May-day sports, we shall give a few extracts. Stow says,—“In the month of May, the citizens of London of all estates, generally in every parish, and in some instances two or three parishes joining together, had their several Mayings, and did fetch their May-poles with divers warlike shows; with good archers, morrice-dances, and other devices for pastime, all day long; and towards evening they had stage-plays and bonfires in the streets. These great Mayings and May-games were made by the governors and masters of the city, together with the triumphant setting up of the great shaft, or principal May-pole, in Cornhill, before the *parish church* of Saint Andrew, which was thence called Saint Andrew Undershaft.”—*Survey of London*.

The May-pole being set up near the church, sufficiently speaks its original connexion with religion. We remember to have been told, that in our native village the May-pole used to stand opposite the church-gate.

Strutt says, in his *Sports and Pastimes*, “No doubt the May-games are of long standing, though the time of their institution cannot be traced.” Strutt never dreamt of going to India for their origin.

The May-pole, like the Round Tower of Ireland, was the Phallus of Greece, borne in her mystic processions, and the Lingham of India, the emblem of the procreative power,—the

Creator, in the universal Triad. The single upright unhewn pillar was another of these emblems, one of which is still to be found in the Island of Purbeck, among many others in this country.

Stubbs tells us, in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, 1595, that "against May-day, every parish, town, or village, assemble themselves together, both men, women, and children; and either altogether, or dividing themselves into companies, they go some to the woods and groves, some to the hills and mountains, where they spend all the night in pleasant pastimes; and in the morning they return bringing with them birch boughs and branches of trees to deck their assemblies withal. But their chiefest jewel they bring from thence is the May-pole, which they bring home with great veneration."

(23)

*and shadowy Death**On his pale war-horse, followed by all hell. . p. 187.*

"The tenth Avatâr of the Hindoos, yet to come, is expected to appear mounted, like the crowned conqueror in the Apocalypse, on a white horse, with a scimitar blazing like a comet, to mow down all incorrigible and impenitent offenders who shall then be on earth."—*Sir William Jones's Gods of Greece, Italy, and India.*

See Note to the *Dragon-King*, first Series, on the White Horse. "To the White Horse of SUANTOVITE, which no one was permitted to groom but his priests, the Saxons sought for presages, and the future events of battle."—*Alyett Sammes.*

(24)

*Thou a mother?**Thou, savage woman of a savage race. . . . p. 189.*

We have introduced a Sclavonian family into England, but we do not conceive that in this there is any approach to the improbable or the marvellous; for in the Roman, Saxon, Danish, and Norman armies, either compelled, or as voluntary adventurers, many of every warlike tribe in Europe have visited the shores of Britain. What would have been said to us, had we, like Lewis in the *Castle Spectre*, introduced an African negro; and yet there are proofs that *black slaves* were known in Europe, ay, and in England, in the eleventh century. Had Lewis been aware of this, he might have triumphed over those who laughed at his supposed anachronism.

"In the year 1094, Ordericus introduces a dream of a priest, which displays some fancy, but which is more remarkable for showing that *blacks* were then known in Europe: he mentions a trunk carried by two *Æthiops*; and afterwards, mentioning

an army quite black, calls it an *Agmen Æthiopum*, p. 694. But we learn the same curious fact from *Domesday Book*, where one is mentioned with the *Servi* in England. In the enumeration of *Glowcesterceire*, we have eight *Servi et anus Afrus*, p. 165. There is also a person called *Matthus Mauritania*, p. 170."—*Hist. Mid. Ag.*

(25) *See instant execution on him done,
And cast his headless carcass in the river. . . p. 198.*

"The circumstances of *Edric's* death are told differently, as usual. *Florence* admits that he was killed in the king's palace; but one says that he was hanged, another that he was strangled, another that he was beheaded. Human testimony is characterized by these petty variations."—*Hist. Ang.-Sax. v. ii. p. 580.* The glorious uncertainty of history as well as law!

(26) *His form is such
As few, in my weak judgment, equal, save
Your noble glory. p. 200.*

"Glory," a Saxon title of royalty. "The Northerns have transmitted to us the portrait of *Canute*: he was large in stature, and very powerful; he was fair, and distinguished for his beauty; his nose was thin, eminent, and aquiline; his hair was profuse; his eyes bright and fierce."—*Ibid.*

(27) *the tuneful Scalds
Who throng my court shall to the end of time
Transmit with glory. p. 204.*

"Of the *Scalds* who attended him, the names and verses of many have survived to us. *Sighvatr*, *Ottar the Swarthy*, *Thordr Kolbeinson*, and *Thorarin Loftunga*, are among those whose historical poems or panegyrics have been much cited by *Snorre* in his *Northern History*."—*Ibid.*

"Every bold adventurer, when he set out on any piratical or military expedition, if he was not a great poet himself, which was frequently the case, never neglected to carry with him the best poets he could procure, to behold and celebrate his martial deeds.—(*Olai Wormii Literatura Danica.*) We may be certain, therefore, that all the leaders of the several armies of Saxons, Angles, Jutes, and Danes, who formed settlements and erected kingdoms in this island, brought their poets with them, to sing their exploits and victories."—*Hist. Great Brit.*

- (28) *A loving father's prayers shall oft invoke
The shadow of thy presence.* p. 206.

Among the ancient Britons, the departed spirit had the power of animating any substance or body. In the poem of Cynddelw, addressed to Owen, Prince of Powis, we read—"In the form of a vibrating shield before the rising tumult, borne aloft on the shoulder of the leader; in the form of a lion before the chief with the mighty wings; in the form of a terrible spear with a glittering blade; in the form of a bright sword, spreading flame in the conflict, and overwhelming the levelled ranks; in the form of a dragon (banner) before the sovereign of Britain; and in the form of a daring wolf, has Owen appeared."—*Davies's Druids.*

- (29) *To save him from a meaner death, I'd joy
To spill this heart's best blood,—die, and re-die,
With countless agonies, to make him blest. . .* p. 207.

This is no exaggeration of maternal affection. Matilda, the wife of William the Conqueror, said to him of her son, "If Robert were in his grave, and could be revived by my blood, I would pour it all out to restore him."

- (30) *This amulet, this blessed Cross, wherein
Relics miraculous lie hidden, shall shield us. . .* p. 209.

"Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, carried on a manufactory of gold crosses and keys, in which holy filings of the chains of St. Peter and St. Paul, and other relics, were incorporated. These were sold and distributed over Britain, Gaul, Spain, Germany, Africa, Constantinople, and many parts of the East."

- (31) *Here is the skull
Of kingly warrior, from whose brim they quaffed
Brain-maddening draughts; and this the scalp of one.* p. 211.

The similarity of the Scythians to the Western Indians in certain ferocious customs, is remarkable. As the Scythians and Goths scalped those whom they slew, and displayed those scalps as trophies, like the Americans; so the latter, like the Scandinavians, drank out of the skulls of their enemies.

"I shall go to war to revenge the death of my brothers! I shall kill, I shall exterminate, I shall burn my enemies! I shall bring away slaves; I shall devour their heart, dry their flesh, drink their blood! I shall tear off their scalps, and make

cups of their skulls."—*Indian War Song. Bossu's Travels through Louisiana.*

As the most glorious of all ornaments, the Huns fastened the scalps of their enemies, who had fallen by their hands, to the trappings of their horses.—*Vide Amme. Marcell.* They are also said to have drank of the blood of the slain.

The body of Oswald, King of Northumberland, who was slain fighting at Oswestree against Penda of Mercia, being found among the dead, the inhuman conqueror cut it into several pieces, and fixing them on stakes, erected them on the field of battle as trophies of his victory. Wonders were performed by his right hand, which Bede says was preserved in his time uncorrupted in the church of Peterborough.

"Once in twelve years, it is said, the Zajah offers a solemn sacrifice of various living animals in pairs, and two men, the skulls of the latter being used as drinking-cups at the shrine."—*Asiatic Journal*, 1826, p. 509.

In the reign of Ethelred, Uhtred, Earl of Northumberland, defeated Malcolm, King of Scotland, at the siege of Durham. "After the victory he selected the most handsome of the slain, whose heads by his orders were cut off, washed in the river, and, with their long braided hair, fixed on stakes round the walls of the city. To reward this service, Ethelred appointed him Earl, and gave him his daughter Elfgyva in marriage."—*Lingard's Hist. of Eng.*

So late as the reign of Henry VIII., during the administration of the Duke of Albany in Scotland, Sir David Hume of Wedderburn, struck off the head of the *Sieur de la Beauté*, Warden of the Borders, and wore his hair, which was remarkably long and beautiful, as a trophy at his saddle-bow. What a modern Hun!

(32) *Where no mortal step intrudes. . . p. 214.*

The sacred woods which overshadow the sources of the *Gambia* and the *Rio Grande*, are supposed by the African tribes to be inhabited by spirits: no axe is ever heard amid their solitudes, and death would be the consequence should any one dare to penetrate them.

(33) *Turn to the north while thus I wave my wand,
And breathe the Runic spell. . . p. 216.*

During many ceremonies of Northern witchcraft, it was deemed necessary to look toward the north.

Hjalmar and Ulpho, in the year 1000, contended for the daughter of the King of Norway; who, unwilling to lose either of those brave warriors, decided their rivalry by giving his

daughter portionless to Hialmar, and to Ulpho a horn of inestimable value, on which the figures of Odin, Thor, and Friga were engraven. This horn, when consulted with proper ceremonies, yielded its magic tones without mortal breath, from which the knowledge of future great events might be divined.

(³⁴) *A priest offers him the corsened bread. . . p. 219.*

Corsened bread, *Panis conjuratus* ; a superstitious trial among the Saxons to purge themselves of any accusation, by taking a piece of barley-bread with solemn oaths and imprecations.

The Saxon ordeal of hot water is practised by the Mandingo tribe in Africa.

(³⁵) *and the Thinga-manna. . . p. 228.*

The Thinga-manna, or Thingmanna, was a chosen body of Danish soldiers, which formed the royal guards of Canute, amounting to three thousand men. They were also called Thinglitha, Thanemen, Sea-Thanes, and Huscarls. This body of troops was stationary in England during Swëin's prosperity, and the reigns of his Danish successors, says Sharon Turner. Their commander, Heming, kept the conquered country in subjection to Canute. Two of their orders were, not to disperse rumours, and not to go beyond their city at night.

(³⁶) *in the shades
Of Coit-maur's forest. . . p. 232.*

The ancient British name of Selwood was Coit-mawr, the great wood.

THE VARANGIAN ;

OR,

MASONIC HONOUR.

A TRAGEDY.

“ From east to west, from north to south,
Far as the foaming billows roll,
Faith, Hope, and silver-braided Truth,
Shall stamp with worth the Mason's soul.”

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NORMANS.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

ODO, Bishop of Bayeux, his uterine Brother.

LANFRANC, Archbishop of Canterbury.

OSMOND, Earl of Dorset.

FITZ-ROLLO, his Friend.

RALPH, Earl of Norfolk.

ROGER, Earl of Hereford.

IVO DE TAILLEBOIS.

ALMÁRIC, Merchant of Waltheof's Household.

PALAMON, Page to Osmond.

JUDITH, Countess of Northumberland.

MATILDA, her chief Attendant.

SAXONS.

EDGAR THE ETHELING, Heir to the English Throne.

HEREWARD DE WAKE, Lord of Brunne, a Varangian.

WALTHEOF, Earl of Northumberland.

FRITHERIG, Abbot of St. Albans.

HAROLD.

ELLA, a female Slave.

BEN ZADOC, a Jewish Slave-merchant.

TOBIAS, his Steward.

HEXULPH, Chief of Ben Zadoc's Rovers.

LAN IVAN, a Descendant of the Bards.

ZALMIRA, a Greek Slave.

TABITHA, Wife to Ben Zadoc.

Guards, Slaves, Servants, Robbers, Officers, &c.

ERA—THE ELEVENTH CENTURY.



THE VARANGIAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Palace at Winchester.*

Enter Osmond and Fitz-Rollo.

FITZ-ROLLO.

WHAT! sigh for Normandy, when such a field
Of plunder, honour, and dominion lies
Yet half unwon before us! Castles, lands,
Titles, and baronies are, by the will
Of our great master, showered on all deservers:
And for these English dogs,—their proudest chiefs
Are abject slaves, who humbly kiss our feet
In vassalage, right thankful if no stripes
With our commands are given, to quicken them
In doing us low service.

OSMOND.

I am weary,
Fitz-Rollo, of this dull and savage isle,
A land of vile barbarians. ⁽¹⁾ Heavily pass
The lagging hours. Even in the Conqueror's court,
'Tis still the question how my time t' employ,
And where to find amusement which shall smooch
The rugged plumes of Time to downy gold,

And make him merrily his sands out-shake,
Like music tuned to love.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Go, bid thy slaves
Some Saxon fair one to thy chamber bring, ⁽²⁾
Famed for her beauty : be she maid or wife,
It recks not aught,—she will some hours amuse,
And charm away thy languor.

OSMOND.

No, I hate
Compulsive pleasures. Then their barbarous tongue
Is harsh and grating,—'tis not framed for love ;
And when these Saxon females are enraged,
O, I would rather hear a chattering flock
Of angry jays, the howl of forest wolves,
Or shriek of midnight hags met on the heath
To summon from the tomb its sheeted dead,
And blast the land with witcheries ! O, it shocks me !

FITZ-ROLLO.

I little heed what sounds are in their tongue,
If but their faces please. When they grow loud,
I always show my instrument of power,—
A good sharp sword, which makes them quickly mute,
And melts their coyness into willing duty.

OSMOND.

Give me the sweet Provençal tongue for love : ⁽³⁾
Our Norman ladies have sweet voices, tuned
Like lays of Troubadours.—Fitz-Rollo, come,
We'll hawk to-day.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Ay, with a willing heart ;
Or hunt down Saxon slaves,—right noble sport !
And though, when caught, we cannot on them feed,

They'll in the slave-mart yield a better price
Than the most dainty bird.

OSMOND.

What, ho! my page.

Enter Palamon.

Thou, Palamon, shalt one day be a squire,
My body-squire, my banner-man, and give
The watch-word in my battles. Thou dost learn
Thine exercises aptly, child of honour.
Thou mayst, in time, attain the envied rank
Of sacred knighthood, win thy golden spurs,
Thy belt and crimson mantle, and become
Chief of a thousand lancemen.

PALAMON.

Why I can vault

Already o'er your war-horse; run a mile,
Nor stop to gather breath,—ay, and ascend
A ladder set against the battlements,
Nor touch it with my feet. Then I can climb
The steepest rocks, and dash into the flood,
Nor heed, however strong, the eddying current;
And for a trench, by the bright peacock bird
And our blest Lady! I can clear the moat,
Which circles yon great keep-tower, at a bound! (4)

OSMOND.

Thou dost improve betimes, my goodly child,
In stature, strength, and grace.

PALAMON.

O how, my lord,

I long to be a man! that for the love
Of ladies I may tilt it in the ring.
Ah, well know I there is a lady, who

Hath bright eyes like the sunbeams, and a voice
Sweet as the sky-bird's when those sunbeams kiss
The silent rain-drops of the summer cloud :
And know I too, as truly, that to win
Her silken favours for your warlike crest,
You would in listed field rejoice to meet
The stoutest knight in Europe. Send you not
Some letter, or sweet message, by your page
To her ere night ? I love such errands well ;
For she, one day, did give me——

FITZ-ROLLO.

What, good boy ?

PALAMON.

O ladies' favours must be ever secrets.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Tell me, young sprig of gallantry, her name.

PALAMON.

That would be breach of honour in a page.
I never whisper love-tales,—or could I
Speak of a certain damsel who was found,
One moonlight evening, with a nameless knight
Beside yon river in the alder grove ;
And how that knight the lady fondly kissed
Beneath a——Was it not a beechen tree,
My Lord Fitz-Rollo ?

FITZ-ROLLO.

Peace ! you little knave.

PALAMON.

Little ! sir knight ? Why am I not grown tall,
Ay, very tall, for one who is no more
In debt to years than I am ?

OSMOND.

Forward child,

Thy thoughts do far outrun thy tender age.
Go, bid the grooms prepare my hunting-steeds,
And let those saddles with rich paintings decked
Be for our use to-day ; ⁽⁵⁾ well burnished, too,
The golden bridles : bid my falconers,
In blue and scarlet, hood my noble birds,
And fasten well their broidered bewits on,
With all their silver bells. What shall I wear ?
O, I've bethought me.—Palamon !

PALAMON.

My lord,
Your gracious pleasure.

OSMOND.

Gentle page, command
My chamber squires who on my wardrobe wait,
That they lay out my new surcoat of bright
Flesh-coloured silk, with emerald wreaths embossed
And fringed with silver : it befits me well.
And let me have my sapphire belt with clasps
Of figured gold, and the blue mantle lined
With snow-white ermine ; nor forget my cap
Of crimson damask, with its blood-red plumes
Brought from the coast of Afric.

PALAMON.

I shall well
Remember, sir. [Exit Palamon.]

OSMOND.

And yet, methinks, 'tis not
A day for field-sports.—No, Fitz-Rollo, no !
I will not hunt to-day.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Shall we then call
The mimic players that follow still the court ? ⁽⁶⁾

Their dances, minstrelsy, and merry tales
May well amuse us, till the banquet hour
To more substantial jollity invites
Our willing presence; when the flowing cups,
Filled with the vintages of sunny France,
Will circle briskly, and clear off the fogs
Of this dull isle that mantle on our wit,
Which then shall flash in joyous brightness forth.

OSMOND.

O lovely France ! thy name stirs in my soul
A thousand joys,—ten thousand fond regrets.
O for thy splendid tournaments again !
In which so oft on thy proud fields have I
Dashed onward to the trump's enlivening notes,
The gayest of her knights.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Rather would I
Rush to the plunder of some wealthy town
Or castle of these hated Saxon lords,
Than win a bootless prize in boy-like strife.

OSMOND.

So would not I. Give me thy listed fields,
Bright France, again ! My spirit burns to view,
Though but in fancy, those gay scenes of fame.
Gold-bannered tents and curtained galleries spread
Their rainbow dyes on every side, with kings
And princes thronged in gorgeous majesty ;
Where twice a thousand radiant beauties shone
With bright gems splendid, and still brighter eyes,
That formed a galaxy of mingled beams
Circling the noisy barriers. Then what crowds
Of war-like knights and steeds of noble breed,
In polished arms and jewelled trappings clad,

That dashed the sunlight off in vivid streams,
Till far the shining plain seemed all on fire.
In such an hour, how swelled my joyous heart
As the loud trump rang forth its martial peal,
And called me to the strife. From helm to spur
Gleaming in gold and gems, I onward urged
My war-horse like the fire-levin bolt of Jove ;
While round the picture of my lady-love
On my broad shield displayed, (7) that orb's bright marge
Shot forth encircling splendours !

FITZ-ROLLO.

Ha ! ha ! ha !

OSMOND.

Why dost thou laugh, and interrupt my dream
Of knightly glory ?

FITZ-ROLLO.

O, I laugh to think
How oft the artist was employed to paint
Fresh damsels on that shield,—save it could change
To Flattery's mirror by some wizard spell,
Wherein whatever maid, to whom at each
New tilt thou for the envied prize didst kneel,
Might proudly glass her beauty.

OSMOND.

Thou dost grow,
My knightly brother, somewhat too severe.

FITZ-ROLLO.

O, by St. Rimini ! I'd rather see
The flames ascending from some city sacked,
Than all the proud chevaunche of merry knights.
Then, for a gallant prize, give me a herd
Of lusty slaves fit for the public mart.
They're worth a million of your love-devices,

And all the scraps of female gear that flutter,
Like scare-crows, on the mail of lass-lorn knight.

OSMOND.

Our tastes run counter, though our hearts are one.—
Hast heard the latest news?

FITZ-ROLLO.

Some fresh revolt?

Or a new inroad on the Cambrian borders?
I care not which; they'll yield us equal sport,
And rescue me from sloth. My Norman sword
Will win me conquest, conquest give me slaves
And a more wide dominion. Thou art fallen
Into a goodly heritage; the Earldom
Of Dorset, given thee by his Highness, is
A portion for a prince, and Sherborne towers
A princely dwelling.⁽⁸⁾ But the news, the news!
I grow impatient for some stirring times.

OSMOND.

I nothing know of any fresh revolt:
But, as I hear, Lord Hereward de Wake
Is from the East return'd to Ely's isle;
Whence, like a bloated spider in his web,
He still darts forth to plunder with his hordes,
Bidding the King defiance. Fame is loud
In her report of his right valiant deeds:
He is the theme of every minstrel's song,⁽⁹⁾
The pride of every Saxon; they aver
He never lost a battle. Then, for arts
And stratagems in warfare, all allow
He is without compeer.

FITZ-ROLLO.

By the holy rood,
The better still for me, so could I find

This famed Sir Beelzebub. Come, let us hence :
I'm eager more to learn. I'll seek him out,
And, having made this demon knight my captive,
Send him to France, a foot-slave for some lady. ⁽¹⁰⁾
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*The Hall of Audience. — Flourish of trumpets.*—King William discovered on the Throne, the Earl of Hereford, Earl of Norfolk, Lanfranc, Guards and Attendants.

KING.

It shall not be,—this marriage I forbid.
Thou, Earl of Hereford, and my Lord of Norfolk,
On your allegiance think of it no more :
Thou shalt not, Ralph, with Hereford's sister wed.

NORFOLK.

Your Highness must excuse me, when I dare
To plead the strong affections of my heart,
Bound to that lovely lady.

KING.

Must ! sir knight ?

Dare not to breathe a word like that to us.
Must, doth but ill become a vassal's lips.
We are thy sovereign, and will be obeyed.

NORFOLK.

Far as in duty to your Highness bound,
In all things will I yield : but where my heart
And honour bind me to my lady-love,
I say again, I must and will be free.

KING.

That means, thy service and obedience go
So far as our commands may please thy fancy.
Audacious Baron ! I shall curb thy pride ;

And if ye do not both my will obey,
Ye from these English shores shall soon be driven,
And banished Normandy. Thy bridal day,
If, Norfolk, thou persist to wed, shall be
An evil day to all : a long divorce
Shall mar thy hoped-for joys ; and thy sad bride,
Robed like a widow in the weeds of woe,
Mid her lone bower thine absence long bewail.

NORFOLK.

Good Heaven amend thee, King ! What ! have I served
Thy bold designs and purposes for this ?
With sixty barques, manned by a well-armed train,
Did I not furnish thee, when to this isle
Thou cam'st to seek a kingdom ? 'Thou forget'st
How I at Hastings fought, and hewed my way
Through Harold's stalwart ranks ; how—but it irks
My very soul to speak of what I've done
To make thy ducal seat a kingly throne.

KING.

Matchless effrontery ! Vain, proud-hearted Norfolk,
And wouldst thou have me think I owe to thee
The wreath bound on these brows ? Slave, 'twas this arm,
With iron sinews nerved,—this heart of steel,
With the brave blood of northern Rollo filled,
That won this island throne ; and thou shalt find,
If to my power rebellious, this same arm
Shall crush thee into dust !

NORFOLK—(*not heeding him.*)

By all the saints,
My services a brave reward awaits,
To have my brightest blossoms rudely shook
From Hope's fair tree by the tempestuous blast

Of power unbridled ! What ! to be denied
The meanest freeman's privilege,—to choose
Where his fond heart directs ? Let cowardice
And shame tread on my heels, if I do not
Fulfil my vows of love !

HEREFORD.

Why this would teach
Meekness to be a railer ! I am not
Gifted with patience, therefore would I speak,
Though the grim headsman with his gleaming axe
Stood waiting for my blood. Know, thou proud King,
A Norman Baron will be free to act,
Within his own dominions, as the prince
That sways a regal sceptre.

KING.

Ay, but he,
I swear, shall to this throne that homage pay,
His vassals pay to him.

HEREFORD.

Go trample thou
On thy base Saxon slaves—the coward English,
Whose name it is a foul disgrace to bear ; ⁽¹¹⁾
And bow *their* necks beneath thine iron yoke.
But I and valiant Norfolk will assert
The rights of free-born Normans.

LANFRANC.

Calm, my lords,
Your wrath-enkindled spirits. Know ye not
It is a liegeman's duty to bow down
Submissively to his high will who reigns
Your feudal sovereign, whose prerogatives
Ye seek to abrogate ?

HEREFORD.

Italian priest,
Ne'er meddle thou with what concerns thee not:
'Tis dangerous, be assured. Let him first learn
To bound the licence of his lawless power,
That, like a whirlpool, seeks to engulph our freedom
In its wide-circling eddies.

KING.

Hence, rash fools!
Your passion misbecomes you. Hereford,
The love which I did bear thy gallant sire,
Is a strong shield between my wrath and thee.
Quit now my sight, ere it too fiercely burns
To be endured; for, by the Resurrection!
My vengeance shall fall heavy on your heads,
If ye persist to cross me.

HEREFORD—(*as he turns from the King.*)

Norfolk, heed
Thou not his threatenings. Be, like me, but firm,
And from this marriage I'll occasion pluck
For glorious deeds hereafter. [Exeunt.

KING.

Lanfranc, thou
My bosom counsellor art. Is it not hard
That I must ever wrestle with the storm?
Let but one sunny gleam of peace shine out,
And doubly dark the howling tempest comes.
But never quails my spirit, for my path
From earliest years hath in the whirlwind been;
And Victory, like a handmaid, ever waits
To strew the golden track my foot hath trod
Along the course of Time, with laurels dipt
Deep in the life-blood of my sternest foes.

LANFRANC.

Were it not better, good my royal liege,
To grant the boon these Earls so much desire?

KING.

That, Lanfranc, were weak policy indeed.
Their powerful houses, knit by marriage bonds,
Would stir up endless strife,—nay, I've decreed
The Lady Isabelle of Hereford
To Jaques of Normandy.

Enter Odo.

Bishop of Bayeux,

I hear, of late, that in thy soaring hopes
Thou, like the cedar, dost thy branches spread
High in the heavens, deep-shadowing us and all
Of humbler growth, whom thy transcendent pride
Accounts as weeds and brambles of the forest;
That thy ambition swells like some full stream,
Whose wintry billows sweep o'er rock and shore:
But have a care, or I'll that flood embank,
And make its turbulence to foam and fret
In narrower bounds, o'er which it ne'er shall leap.

ODO.

I lack the skill such figures to divine,
Or read their meaning.

KING.

Meaning? Why, my lord,

That bishoprics are but the humble steps
By which thou aim'st t' ascend that lofty throne
Whose footstool is above the seat of kings,
And reign, by virtue of elective right,
Sovereign o'er Christendom.

T

ODO.

Suppose, sir King,
That in the high consistory at Rome
I should be at the next election chosen :
If such proud destiny the stars ordain,
Am I to blame ? Thou rather shouldst rejoice
To find th' unworthiness of thy poor brother
Deemed meet to fill the throne of Christ on earth.
If Heaven decree that on my head should fall
Honour, dominion, wealth, and power divine,
Must I in stubbornness such gifts refuse,
And hide me in a hermit's desert cell,
To feed on roots and wear a sackcloth vest ?

KING.

Small fear is there that thou thy head wilt hide,
When pomp and titles fall from heaven in showers :
As little fear thou wilt that head expose
Uncovered to the sun-blaze and the storm ;
Or in the weeds of sackcloth wrap thy limbs
When a tiara, decked with star-bright gems
And gorgeous vestments, thine acceptance wait.
Thy stormy spirit knowing well, I deem
Thee most unfit to reign enthroned on earth
Above all thrones.

ODO.

Thou hast no right to sit
In judgment on my meetness ; nor canst thou
Change that which is foredoomed.

KING.

Thou art befooled
By a star-gazing prophet's idle dreams :
As if the orbs, in their wide rolling spheres,
Busied themselves with what we do on earth,

Appointing who shall fill our vacant place
When we pass off the stage! I hear thou hast
A splendid palace purchased at proud Rome,
Where thy chief agents bribe the cardinals ;⁽¹²⁾
Nor lack I knowledge of thy deep design
To quit the kingdom secretly, and waste
Thine ill-got riches in Italian climes,
Tempting our Barons from the British shores,
To seek, by war, dominion o'er the South.
But England—no, nor Normandy, my lord,
Shall thus be robbed, or my poor people fleeced
To fill the coffers of intriguing priests,
And batten all the saucy scum of Rome.

ODO.

Be better, King, informed. But grant it true,
What right hast thou to meddle in this business?

KING.

What right, saidst thou, to meddle in this business?
That right which every king by right enjoys.
Placed like the sun amid the heavens, he sits
The radiance and the tempered heat to shower
Of honour and of justice on the worthy:—
That right by which he from the spoiler guards
His people, as the shepherd keeps his flock
From the devouring wolf, making the laws
A terror unto those that evil do,
And to the good a blessing. Thou shalt find
That I have both the right and power to act
As doth become a king.

ODO.

Thy duty goes
No further, or thy power, than temporal rule :
The rest to Heaven's vicegerency belong.

KING.

Much I revere the Apostolic See
Of ancient Rome ; but never, as a king,
An independent sovereign, will I bow
In worldly homage to the proudest head
That wears her diadem, ⁽¹³⁾ an earthly sign
Of a dominion not of earth, but Heaven ;
And were the mitre of all Christendom placed
To-morrow in full conclave on thy brows,
With trumpet-sounding peal, and loud acclaim
Of gather'd princes and Rome's noisy rabble,
Thou, by the Resurrection ! o'er my realms,
People, nor bishops, shouldst have any rule.

ODO.

That may be tried : and let my foot be placed
Once on the steps which lead to Peter's throne,
That foot shall fearless trample in the dust
The boldest head, though circled with a crown,
Which dares dispute my Heaven-descended rights !
Thou mayst, too soon perchance, be taught to learn
How weak are carnal weapons, when opposed
To an uplifted arm, empowered to wield
Heaven's own terrific thunder !

KING.

For Europe's peace,
For England's weal, and for thy private good,
I thee arrest.—What, ho ! my guards, advance !
Convey the Bishop of Bayeux to prison.

[The Soldiers hesitate.]

ODO.

Thou impious King, I am God's minister.
No man on earth dares to arraign or judge
His holy herald, his anointed bishop,

Save he the chief of bishops. At your peril
Here and hereafter be it, if ye touch,
Irreverently, but even my garment's hem.

KING.

Must I perform the office of my slaves?
Soldiers, on your allegiance do my bidding.
Odo, 'tis not the bishop I arrest,
But he whom I created Earl of Kent,
The temporal chief, the governor of England,
When we in Normandy our gay court held:
Shall we not of his stewardship require
A strict account? Hence with the Earl to prison.

[*The Guards advance.*

ODO.

Rome, subtle tyrant, shall avenge my wrongs.
And must th' oppressor's axe lop off the branches
Of my fair tree of promise, filled with flowers
Fresh opening to the sunny beams of greatness,
Wherein the fowls of heaven their nests did make,
While the wild herds beneath its shade reposed?
Must I be left a thunder-blasted trunk,
Withered and bare upon the desert heath,
Nor put forth one fair leap?—the golden streams
That fed my greenness all dried up and gone?
Death or distraction save me from such thoughts!

[*Exit, guarded.*

LANFRANC.

My royal master, let——

KING.

Intreat me not.

My kingdom, palace—nay, my very household
Are filled with pactions that confound my peace.
Treason is every where. These English slaves——

LANFRANC.

Ah, kingly chief ! wouldst thou by gentle means
And gracious kindness strive their hearts to win,
Ruling the Saxon and the Norman race
With equal laws, I feel full bold to say
They would be faithful subjects to thy throne.

KING.

And did I not, when first this land I won,
Good Lanfranc, seek by every gentle art
To make its people happy ? Did I not
Convene the states, that of their own free choice
They on these brows the diadem might place,
When it was mine by good King Edward's will,
And doubly mine by conquest ? Have I not
Still held in reverence due their ancient laws,
And rendered mild the bondage of the slave ?

LANFRANC.

Yet think, your Highness, how these Norman lords,
Like ruthless Huns, rule o'er their wretched serfs ;
How many a gallant English chief, who dwelt
In the bright circle of his tapestried halls,
Now, driven for ever thence, doth naked roam
The dreary woods, and in their winter caves
Companion with the wolf. (14)

KING.

Have they, my lord,
Not merited this rigour ? Think how oft
My quiet they disturbed with endless plots ;
How they in all the provinces stirred up
The flames of civil strife,—from the green banks
And classic bowers of Isis to the Tweed ;
From Kent's pale sea-cliffs to Dunheved's towers,
The mountain-palace of Cornubian kings ;

Till insurrection, like a mighty flood,
Rolled onward to the footstool of our throne,
Threatening to sweep us from these hostile shores.

LANFRANC.

The day of awful retribution's past.
Awake no more the spirit of revenge,
Nor harrow up the bosom of the land
With ruin's gory ploughshare. Now is come
The time to win thy people's hearts by love :
All ranks, all factions, men of every tribe
To thee, great King, for equal justice look,
And, hushed to peace, in calm expectance wait.

KING.

Ay, like the ocean sleeping in the sun,
Till maddened whirlwinds o'er his slumbers rush,
And shake him into fury. Trust ? I've none
In Saxon faith, or Saxon friendship, Lanfranc.

LANFRANC.

Banish suspicion from thy troubled mind,
Which but too oft begets the thing it fears.
Canute remember, thy great predecessor,
How equal were his laws, how just his sway
O'er Dane and Saxon, when the deadly strife
Of those contending nations sank to peace.
Then came the mildness of his after reign,
Like evening sunshine in the broad, clear sky,
Untroubled by the tempest,—sea and shore
Blessing the holy calm. Be thou to all
A loving father ; and as the fierce blood
Of Norman and of Saxon shall unite,—
Like two proud streams, sprung from one northern fount
Though sundered long,—into one mighty flood,
Sweeping corruption's filth and scum away :

Commerce shall on it spread her wealthy sail,
And make fair England with her treasures blest :
Arts, learning, and the sciences shall wake
As from the tomb, and o'er thy kingdom shed
Glory that fadeth not.—

The thunder of thy steps, when first thou trod'st
This isle's pale shores, made her tall mountains tremble,
And all her slumbering institutions shook
At once to fragments, as the earthquake, when
The dread volcano sets the heavens on fire,
Shakes cloud-encompassed cities, and their towers
Dismantles in the dust ! But henceforth rule
With gentleness and mercy, and ere long
This land shall be a paradise of beauty,
As groves luxuriant to the summer winds
Unfold their blossoms, and rich vine-bowers spread
Their golden wealth, where erst the mountain-flame
Outpoured its red destruction.

KING.

Lanfranc, yes :

Let these stern islanders their King obey,
And then in his protection they shall find
A father's loving-kindness. But, my lord,
I shrewdly do suspect them.

Enter Ivo.

IVO.

Mighty prince—

KING.

What tidings bring'st thou, Ivo, from that nest
Of robbers and of rebels, who maintain
In Ely's fen-girt isle their daring treason ?

IVO.

O, good my sovereign lord, I am a man
Scant in my words——

KING.

That may be, Ivo, when
Thou soundly sleep'st.

IVO.

Now know I not, my lord,
Where words to find sufficient for my tale
Of stratagems and robberies, plots and battles,
Of my escapes and dangers. Yet it skills
Not me to speak of half which I have done :
But, not to boast, which I could ne'er endure,
I've been a whirlwind in my wrath against
That bog-encircled isle—a very whirlwind,
Which sweeps down groves of oaks, and on its back
Bears off whole villages; then, fiercer still,
Crumbles to fragments palaces and towers,
And in their dust its nakedness arrays,
Assuming visible shape !—such and so wild
Has been my fury.

KING.

And yet still doubt we
If Ely stands not where it did of yore,
With all its reeds and willows firmly fixt,—
Ay, and its castle, by that rebel built
Stout Hereward de Brunne, even in despite
The whirlwind of thine anger.

IVO.

Good my liege,
That pirate,—may the foul fiend of the moor
Blast him with leprosy ! is to this isle
Returned, with many followers, from the East ;
And now the Saxon outlaws of the woods,

Slaves, cut-throats, vagabonds, and arrant thieves,
In numbers to him flock.

KING.

Thou, Lanfranc, hear'st
How these thy faithful Saxons merit grace.

LANFRANC.

O, heed thou not,—it only claims thy scorn ;
For on the red plain lies Rebellion low,
And these are but the last faint, feeble throbs
Of its death-wounded heart,—the murmuring swell
And heavings of the surge when dark the storm
Hath passed away, and all is hushed above.
Restore the exile to his soul-loved home,
And those fierce spirits of despair no more
Shall wander forth for vengeance ; but repose
In grateful peace, and all their future deeds
The blessed fruits of sweet obedience yield ;
As the deep-roaring cataract's many streams,
When past their barrier rocks, forget to chafe,
And onward in united calmness flow,
Sweetly and silently reflecting heaven,
Like the pure heart of virtue.

IVO.

I have yet
Great news, which must be to your Highness told.

KING.

Brief be thou, then.

IVO.

Ay, good my royal sire.
I hate the ways of many, who will load
A tale, that should be uttered in a breath,
With countless words, with pauses and loud hems,
And repetitions endless. Tales should be——

KING.

What thine, thou tonguesome babbler, never are,—

IVO.

Pithy and brief. Why, I am deemed, my lord,
As dexterous at a tale as at a sword,
And am persuaded oft——

KING.

Then be so now,
To tell at once the tidings thou hast brought.

IVO.

As a fierce troop of hunger-bitten wolves
Rush on the centre of th' unguarded flock,
So, without circumambieney, I dash
Headlong into my story.

KING.

Saints, for patience!

IVO.

I'm never tedious.—Hereward de Brunne,
As goes the frightful legend far and near
In secret whispers, is the wizard chief
Of a strange brotherhood, whose dark intrigues
And mysteries none can fathom,—save themselves.
Report, in fear, speaks of their unknown rites
At dead of night performed. Some say they offer
Children in sacrifice to spirits and fiends
That haunt the lonely moor and forest wilds,
And pledge each other to eternal friendship
In skulls of human blood.

KING.

Glory of heaven!

Doth such a curst society exist
Within my kingdom? By what name are they
Distinguished, Ivo?

IVO.

They themselves do call
“Free and accepted Masons,”—a poor craft
Deem I for chiefs to follow. But, no doubt,
That is some mystic cloak, beneath whose skirts
They hide their fiendish doings. It is said
That Satan on their forehead sets his mark,
By which, though strangers, they each other know,
Unknown to all besides; that every brother
A demon hath to wait upon his beck,
And do him vassalage; that they prepare
Draughts yielding life immortal, and by spells
Base metals turn to gold; that they deny
Allegiance to all earthly kings, and swear
Homage to hell’s grim master.

KING.

And their numbers?—

IVO.

O, none can count or, by my soulscot, tell,
So deep their secrets, where they may be found.
The dreadful confraternity, ’tis feared,
Like blood-veins in the human body, spread
Through all society.

KING.

The sword shall spill
This tainted blood, nor leave a drop behind
Within my kingdom’s body.

IVO.

Then, I doubt,
It will a stinking carcass soon become,
And wolves be its sole masters.

LANFRANC.

Good my lord,

I credit not Suspicion's evil tongue.

"Report, in fear, speaks of their unknown rites :"

How can she speak of that she nothing knows ?

He who their rites ne'er witnessed, cannot bring

True witness of them; nor from those who have,

Can tortures wring the secret. I have heard

From men of good report, and where, my lord,

They dare not lie—in strict confessional,

That innocent and holy are the rites

Of this Masonic craft.

KING.

Talk not to me

Of innocence. Own they not for their liege

The Devil himself ? Art thou, too, of this Order ?

I wrong thee.—Thou art constant to our throne,

As to yon heavens the sun. Have I no friend

To rid me of that bold brigand, that chief

Of wizard-craft and blood ?

IVO.

I have done all,

My gracious lord, that mortal man can do

Against this corsair and his cursed isle,

Which is so girt with fen, morass, and moat,

Lake, bog, and stream——

KING.

Thou hast done nothing yet.

Nothing is done till Hereward be dragged

In chains a captive hither.

IVO.

Ah, sir King,

A terrible Varangian is that chief !

KING.

I'll have the rebel's head ! Varangian ! what

New mystic title's that ? ⁽¹⁵⁾

IVO.

It is a name

His wild crew give him, and it strikes mankind
With dread and horror. When from England fled
This doughty chief, he joined those savage bands
That guard the eastern Emperor, and are called
Varangian axe-men. 'Tis declared that they
Devour the flesh of men ! But well bethought.—
He, in despite of all the Norman knights
Kept to defend the Abbot of Peterborough,
Hath stormed the golden city. Long withstood
The strong walls of the abbey, till he set
Their gates on fire, and rushing through the flames,
The sacrilegious thief with impious hands
Bore off the holy vessels, crowns of gold,
With silver shrines, copes, cups, and gem-wrought robes,
And money-treasures which no man may count ! ⁽¹⁶⁾

KING.

Hell-demon ! Thou hast set my soul on fire !

IVO.

I've fuel yet wherewith to feed the flame.
Earl Guy, lord warden of the Lincoln marshes,
By him is slain, with all his valiant bands.
The fishermen who served his table, brought
This Hereward and his gang concealed in boats
With piles of straw, who, while amid their tents
Our Normans feasted, rushed upon th' unarmed,
And brained them with their axes to a man !
I deem my tales have been all deftly told,
In words most aptly chosen ; and albeit
They wear an ugly visage, yet their dress
Hides their deformity, as goodly garments

Mend a bad face. And then for speed,—how brief
Hath been my phrase on such most weighty subjects !
O, by my soulscot, I do love to tell
My stories with the haste I often count,
At drowsy night, my paternoster belt.

KING.

Thrice-croaking raven, peace ! Long hath this isle
Held out against my power. A Norman fleet
Shall on the sea-side hem these rebels round.
I'll have this wild Varangian, though I pawn
My diadem to raise eternal fleets
And armies for the war !

IVO.

It is in vain :

No mortal power can that freebooter quell,
Or I had brought him down. But he doth wear
Enchanted armour, and a hell-charmed life ;
For he in infant blood hath been baptized
By witches in their dark and unknown caves,
The Devil standing sponsor.—Why, my lord,
His very name will make a legion flee !
I was the only man that firmly stood
Among five hundred, when he last approached
Our forest citadel ; and but for me——
No matter : I detest a boasting soldier.

KING.

Thou art a prodigy,—so much thou lack'st
Self-love, which others cherish.

IVO.

Nay, let not

My lord the King o'ermete my poor deserts.
'Tis true, they say I wonders have performed ;—
Greater I yet may do. But let me counsel

What shall be done to win this last strong-hold
Of rebels in the kingdom.

KING.

Well, proceed.

Yet, if thy words be true, what hope hast thou
Where thy great valour failed?

IVO.

O my good lord,
'Tis not in human strength. But, sire, there is
A strange unearthly woman, who hath long
Dwelt lonely on the bleak and desert moor, ⁽¹⁷⁾
Two leagues from our war-station. None will dare—
Myself excepted—when pale day expires,
Her hut t' approach beneath its blasted oaks,
On which two devils, shaped like ravens, sit
Hoarse croaking to the moon, while faint and far
The shriek of spectres o'er the lone waste comes ;
For she holds converse with invisible things,
Making the dead to speak,—fierce fiends obey
Her warlock spells, and she can taint the flocks
And herds with murrain, blast with racking pains
And cloud-begotten fires all those on whom
Her withering curses light. Let me but place
The wonder-working hag amid our ranks,
I'll pledge my life to vanquish, by her aid,
That fell Varangian robber.

KING.

Ivo, thou

Dost counsel well. Since honourable arms
Of knighthood fail against that blood-baptized,
That demon-child of evil, we will meet
And make him quail beneath our arrows, winged
With mightier spells than his. Speed, Ivo, hence,

And gather valiant men ; then let this witch
Be led into the camp, that she may stand
Amid our warlike van, and dash the fires
Of hell on all our foes.

LANFRANC.

Good angels be
Thy guard, my royal master ! I condemn
The aid of evil spirits.

Enter Messenger.

KING.

Now, the news !

MESSENGER.

Fierce Denmark's sovereign, with ambition fired,
Aided by Norway and the Earl of Flanders,
Prepares a thousand vessels ; while the North
Outpours her swarming bands for Britain's isle,
Where they the inheritance of former years,
And long-departed glory, pant to win.
At Haitheby their fleet collected waits
The mighty embarkation. ⁽¹⁸⁾

KING.

Ho ! within !

Enter Officer.

Send messengers, and from beyond the seas
Call to my standard every hardy knight
That seeks for fame in arms, till I have filled
The land with harnessed steeds and mail-clad men,—
Till her bright shores with bristled lances gleam,
Like distant billows when the weary sun
Hasteneth to meet the ocean.—

Gathering fast,

The dark clouds come, whereon the thunder lies
Pointing his burning arrows. Boldly we
Will through the tempest, like the eagle, dash,
And in the day-beams of dominion hold
Our course above the misty rack and storm :
Established then shall be our throne, unmoved
By stern opposers, and hereafter fame
Crown us with glory : as the lofty cliff,
Which hath for ages braved the ruffian winds
And dashing of the sea-wave's noisy strife,
Is left at last in peace, the sullen deep
Far off retiring to return no more,
While on its golden brows the evening sheds
Her sun-departing splendours.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Palace of the Earl of Northumberland, at Winchester.*

Enter Zalmira and Ella.

ZALMIRA.

MISERY is every where ! No change of place
To me brings joy, tranquillity, or hope.

ELLA.

May I inquire the story of thy woes ?
I am but a poor slave,—slave from my birth ;
But thou, I ween, a better state hast known.
Forgive my humble pity.

ZALMIRA.

Thou art kind,
And we are equals, gentle Ella, here.
The daughter of a noble house was I
In the bright golden city of the East.
What am I now ? A wretched outcast, slave
'To fierce barbarians in a land unknown.
Love, thou—woe worth thee for it ! on my fate
Hast flung this last disgrace.

ELLA.

Ah ! I have heard
But never known,—for I, alack ! have but
A sorry face,—that love brings many cares.
Yet there are pleasures even for us poor slaves
When comes a holiday, and we can run
About the flowery fields——

ZALMIRA.

There is no tree,
No flower grows here, in this cold, dreary isle,
That can remind me, lovely Greece, of thee.—
Land of my birth, the Muses' blessed home,
Thy deep-blue sunny skies, thy moonlight seas,
Soothed with the voice of lover's lute and lay;
Thy palm-groves bending o'er the ruined fane,
With colonnade and portal grey in years;
Thy vine-empurpled hills, and myrtle bowers
Blent with the rich geranium's rainbow dyes;
Thy mountains, too, whose echoes seem the voice
Of ages past, when heroes and bright forms,
Clad in immortal beauty, haunted all
Thy shades and streams,—O, ye are ever nigh
To my sad heart and memory! Nor less dear
My friends, my home, where all that splendour yields
A Moslem paradise around me shed.
Yet what the loss of these, to losing him
Who was the pleasure of all pleasant things!

ELLA.

Sweet soul! Heaven mind her wits, for they are crazed.
O goodness save me! Yonder comes our master,
The merchant of the household. ⁽¹⁹⁾ If found here,
I shall be huffed and buffeted amain. [Exit.

[Zalmira retires.]

Enter Almaric, followed by Slaves of both sexes.

ALMARIC.

Come, be alert, ye lazy, hungry hounds,
Ye idle neifs and wenches, who for nought
Will briskly stir, save in your own sweet pastimes.
Go to, ye losel knaves, log-bearing louts;

Ye snatch-crust trencher knights be quick, and bring
Fresh rushes, with sweet flowers and scented herbs,
Chamber and hall to strew. Go to the mill
For meal of oats; and you, sir Wizleface, see
Three bullocks slain to-day, and five fat sheep,
With two stalled calves; and when they smite, take heed
Thy own calf's head be safe.

FIRST SLAVE.

I would it were
From your hard blows.

ALMARIC.

No murmurings or complaints
When I am present; those must be reserved
T' amuse your idle hours.

SECOND SLAVE.

Then certain 'tis
We never shall be grumblers in this house,
While you are merchant here.

ALMARIC.

Take thou good heed
To thy free tongue; 'tis an unruly member.

SECOND SLAVE.

How should his tongue be free, who may not call
One limb his own? Or how should he have rule
O'er that which is another's?

ALMARIC.

Aptly questioned.
And as 'tis I who have the sovereign power,
I'll curb that saucy member, or make all
Its fellow-members suffer for its folly.
Soft-swearing rudesby, 'tis thy place to light
The fire in the great oven.—Look to it well,
My man of small-beer wit; for I protest

If thou the wheaten cakes and manchets burn,
Or if the simnel wafers be not sweet
And rich in taste, thou to the whipping-post
Shalt be tied up, and twice ten stripes receive.—
No muttering, sulky varlet. Where I reign
The merchant of the household, all shall do
Unmurmuringly their duty, or be sold
Beyond the seas. As for your own coarse bread
Of buckwheat, horsebeans, barley-bran, and rye, ⁽²⁰⁾
It claims not my regard. Now mark me: if
Ye loiter in your tasks, I'll cut you short
In my purveyance of your daily fare,
And nail you by the ear t' th' buttery-hatch,
Till hunger mend your sloth.—Away! ye moths,
Sluts, lobcocks, sluggards! [Exeunt Slaves.]

Ha! Zalmira here?

Come hither.—Why so sad? Thou art of all
Our captive maids the fairest in the household.
Good things have I in store for thee, if thou
Meet my fond wishes.

ZALMIRA.

There is nothing good
This world can yield me now, for I am past
All hope, all consolation. Earth no more
Can stir the passions in this frozen heart.
I am like one—if ever such there were—
Who breathless, motionless, and voiceless lies
With marbled limbs entranced, and yet awake
To all the scenes of sadness or of joy
Around him passing.

ALMARIC.

By the Host, thou talk'st
In lofty riddles; but thy gentle voice

Is like the music of a minstrel's song
Heard in a foreign land, whose tones are sweet
Although unknown his language. Comely slave,
My love for thee is mighty. Marvel'st not
That I, a man of worship, condescend
Thus low and long to woo, who can command
So many fair and yielding maids that doat
On my desired person?

ZALMIRA.

O, in compassion
To such desiring fools, on them bestow
The gift of thy perfections, nor to me,
So thankless for a favour I would shun,
Proffer what others covet,—thy sweet person ;
Which seems, in my poor judgment, formed of all
That in thy sex is hateful.

ALMARIC.

Poor ingrate !
But I must teach thee better. Thou remember'st
When the slave-merchant, that old, bearded Jew,
Who with his human cattle up and down
The country travels, brought thee to this city?—
I saw thee in the slave-mart and, well pleased
With thy soft beauty, purchased thee, albeit
There was no lack of maidens in this house ;
No, nor of comely ones, well skilled in all
Th' accomplishments and graces of thy sex.
In pity to that delicate form, did I
Not take thee from the bondage of a wretch
Who knew no mercy? Yet, ungrateful, thou
Art coy and cold, and ever weeping tears
Like a November cloud.

ZALMIRA.

Ay, for thine own
Vile purposes thou took'st me, not in pity
To my affliction. But I was not born
To be the abject slave of thy desires.
Fallen as I am, my spirit soars beyond
The darkness of my doom, as upward mounts
The tuneful sky-bird to the gates of morn,
Ere earth and night have parted.

ALMARIC.

Am I not
Merchant and ruler of a princely household,
In which the female slaves all envy thee
My kind regard, my condescending love?

ZALMIRA.

As the ghost-haunted yew-tree darkly towers,
Rooting itself in dead men's graves, so thou
Dost, mid corruption's foul and putrid soil,
Clad in thy scant and borrowed power, put forth
Thy branches proudly, poisonous dewes distilling
On all beneath, where lurk the envenomed toad,
And speckled adders coil their slimy folds.

ALMARIC.

Is this meet language to a man like me?—
And yet I love thee still.

ZALMIRA.

Thy love is like
The fondness of those creeping plants that kill
The noble tree to which they closely cling.
Vain dotard! all antipathies shall meet
In cordial union, thunder and lone silence,
Sunshine and deepest night together dwell,

And summer on pale winter's snowy brow
Her roseate garlands bind, ere love shall join
Our hearts in unison.

ALMARIC.

Nay, pretty fool,
How canst thou to thyself so cruel prove?
If with my tender wishes thou comply,
Light shall thy service be, nor wilt thou feel
The common lot of slaves. Thou shalt be clothed
In costly robes of freedom,—ay, and wear
Chains too of gold; nor shall some sparkling gems
Be wanting to adorn those raven locks,
Which, in despite of slavery's law, have I
Saved yet from being shorn.

ZALMIRA.

Must I endure
This insolence to honour and to virtue?
Thou base and scurvy groom, avaunt! nor dare,
Slave though I am, t' insult me with thy presence.

ALMARIC.

What silly airs are these? I marvel much.
This proud reserve will nought avail with me.
There stands no lord 'twixt thy unwillingness
And my full power—— [Seizing her hand.

ZALMIRA.

Vile slave, thou liest! A lord
There is who stands betwixt thy brutal power
And my unsullied virtue, even He
The Lord of lords, whose might the creeping worm,
And all those worlds that flash through midnight skies,
Guards with an equal care. On Him I call:
Help! help me, Heaven! I have no friend but Thee.

Enter Hereward, in the habit of a slave.

ALMARIC.

Why, who art thou ?

HEREWARD.

A man ! bound by the laws
Of manhood to protect a woman, when
Base-hearted power insults her.

ZALMIRA—(*shrieking.*)

Ha ! it is

His voice ! his face ! It is my long-lost——

[*Faints in the arms of Hereward.*]

HEREWARD.

Mother of God ! what blessed vision cheers
My wondering sight ? Can this I see and feel
Be real life ? Is it not shadow all ?
No, it hath substance.—Yes, kind Heaven, it is
My own beloved Zalmira !

ALMARIC.

Hence, base dog !

Who sold'st thyself to be my household slave,
My drudge, but yesterday ; or I shall so
Chastise thy insolence, that thou wilt find
'Twere better to have thrust thy naked hand
Into the lion's mouth, than thwart my will.

HEREWARD.

Go and chastise thy base unruly passions,
And to my keeping this fair maid resign ;
Or on thy carcass shall this hand alight
So heavily, that thou wilt, in thy fear,
Think it the lion's paw.

ALMARIC.

Thou dunghill grub !

This damsel is my money-boughten slave,

As thou art, foul-mouth, with thy wolfish leer.
Then dare not, at the peril of thy life,
To interpose between us. Yield her up.

[*Seizing Zalmira.*

HEREWARD.

Proud villainy, avaunt ! Then take thou that !

[*Striking Almaric.*

ALMARIC.

Renowned St. Dransius save me ! ⁽²¹⁾ What, a blow !
Scarce have I breath to speak. A lion's paw
This fellow hath indeed ! A bond-slave strike
A freeman ! one who in a prince's house
High office holds ! This shall to thee be death.
Had I my sword, I would not wait for law.

HEREWARD.

Nor, had I mine, should justice wait for thee.

ALMARIC.

The debt I owe thee soon shall be discharged,
And no complaint will ever pass thy lips
That thou hast not received its full amount. [*Exit.*

ZALMIRA.

Alas ! my lord——

HEREWARD.

Fear not, for I am safe
From the poor impotence of his revenge.
But tell me, dear one, how comes it that I
Behold thee in this far-off isle o' th' west
A wretched slave, to insult and to toil
Unfriendly exposed ?—I, who believed
Thou still wert in thy father's gorgeous halls,
The worship of all eyes which on thee gazed,
Awaiting that glad hour of promised bliss

When I should to the Emperor's court return,
And claim thee for my bride.

ZALMIRA.

When thou, a chief
In the Varangian guards, the Emperor's leave
Didst gain to visit these thy native shores,
A princely lover sought my hand, and won
My sire's consent. No hope was left for me
But in a speedy flight; and I, disguised,
Embarked on board a vessel bound for France.
On the wild seas a pirate took our ship,
And happily to this famed island bore us,
Where I was to a Hebrew merchant sold
Who deals in slaves; and being hither brought,
Became the bondmaid of that wretch, from whom
Thy timely presence saved me.

HEREWARD.

Blest be Heaven!
For in Despair's dark, shadow-haunted vale
We gather the bright flowers of hope and joy.
My dearest one, my own Ionian maid,
All now shall soon be well.

ZALMIRA.

O, I am like
The dungeon captive, who at early dawn
Comes forth to liberty, and once more looks
On the rich splendours of the morning skies,
Which, filled with music, shed a dazzling flood
Of glory on his long-beclouded sight,
While Eden round him blooms. But now I gaze
On thee again, how is it I behold
My brave Varangian in these peasant weeds
Of slavery clad? Alas! how canst thou save

Zalmira from pollution, or the tomb,
Who art thyself a bondman?

HEREWARD.

Be at peace.

I hither came in this attire to seek
My dear-loved brother, Morcar, Earl of Mercia,
Whom the stern Norman bastard, with false wiles,
Allured into his power. I sold myself
A slave, that under such disguise I might
Discover in the tyrant's court where now,
A chain-bound captive, in some dungeon lies
That foe to Norman rule. But fear thou not,
For there are those in Waltheof's household who
Are friends to our good cause; and a stout band
Awaits my signal-horn in yonder woods.
But, till we quit this city, let my name
Escape not thy sweet lips.

Enter Almaric, with armed Slaves.

ALMARIC.

There stands the dog,
The saucy bond-slave, who dared lift his hand
Against his master. Drag him to a dungeon.
At eventide he hangs.

[The slaves seize Hereward.]

HEREWARD.

City and court
Shall perish first in flames!

ALMARIC.

That's treason. Mark,
He uttereth treason!

ZALMIRA.

I will with thee go

To prison and to death. Would I had died,
Ere thou beheld'st these crime-polluted halls.

HEREWARD.

Be calmly firm, my loved Ionian maid.
No supplication here. Full well know I
Thy Grecian spirit bravely will protect
Thy person from that foul insulter's touch.
Receive this dagger, which I did forget,
Or in my passion I had with it stabbed
Yon villain coward. An Ionian girl
Knows how to use it in bright honour's cause.
Farewell but some brief hours, and then we meet
To part no more. Lead on, base, menial herd,
Driven by a baser Norman, menial cur.
If thou a finger lift to wrong that maid,
Thy blood shall pay the forfeit of thy daring.

[Exit, guarded.]

ALMARIC.

Pshaw ! Surly shag-eared bear, within twelve hours
The hungry ravens shall o'er thy carcass croak.
You now, my weeping lady-bird, may mark
The punishment of those who dare insult
Me,—the intendant of this princely household.
Hadst thou not better, ere it be too late,
Consent more pleasingly ? 'Tis true, I feel
(Seeing the love by thee to others shown)
A kind of non-regardance in my heart ;
Yet I, perchance, may—for a time—

ZALMIRA.

Grim fiend,
Avoid my sight ! I fear no more thy power.
Barbarian, think'st thou I, in whose veins flow
The blood of princes, e'er could stoop to thee ?

A Grecian maid ! whose native land resounds
Throughout the world for science, arts, and arms,
Conquest and freedom,—on whose laurelled brows
The glory of a thousand ages shine,
Won by the deeds of her immortal sons !
And shall the daughter of a land so famed
Be made a foul reproach by losel grooms ?
Insult my spotless honour once again,
And thou shalt find that in this bosom burns
The heroic fire of that illustrious race,
The pride of ancient Greece, from which I sprang ;
And ere in me thou shalt disgrace my country,
This poniard will I bury in thy heart ! [Exit.

ALMARIC.

The Saints defend us ! what a walking engine,
Charged with *Greek fire*, goes there !
A precious pair of slaves are these which I
Did purchase in the mart ! A bitter loss !
Let me bethink. The villain cost—ay, what ?
The value of three falcons,—for he rated
His bones and muscles at a swinging price.
Pshaw for the price ! revenge is dearer far.
Yes, one I'll to that lofty station raise
His merits claim ; the other sink so low
By toil and sufferance, that her fire shall fail
To yield the glimmering of a glow-worm's tail. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*The Chamber of the Countess of North-
umberland. A Sideboard of four degrees, ascending
one above the other, and crowned with a tester of
cloth and gold ; each degree being filled with valu-
able ornaments and dishes, cups and vases of silver
and gold.*

*Judith discovered, and Matilda, at a distance,
examining a wardrobe.*

JUDITH—(*rising.*)

I cannot long endure this mental strife;
It maddens me! O, I must quench this fire,
Which Love hath from the eyes of Dorset's Earl,
The gallant Osmond, lighted in my heart;
Or honour and fair fame, like martyr-saints,
Will perish in the flames. An evil hour
Was that in which the Norman conqueror gave
My hand reluctant to Northumberland;
The homely, witless, dull, plain-spoken man,
I hate him!—Many causes for this hate
Torment my bosom. First, he is a Saxon:
Then he is rude, devoid the courtly grace
Of our gay youth of Gaul, gigantic shaped,
And scurvily ill-favoured,—heinous faults
In a fair lady's eye; and, worse than all,
He is my husband! Can there be no way
Found out to rid me of this living plague?
Honour hath chained me to a rugged rock,
While passion, like a vulture, drinks my blood,
And battens on my vitals! What art thou
So busied with, good wench?

MATILDA.

Lady, I seek
That splendid coronet and robe in which
You won so many proud admirers, when
The King gave to the embassy of France
His most magnificent banquet.

JUDITH.

Why should I
To-day be thus arrayed?

MATILDA.

Expect not you
The noble Osmond, Dorset's graceful Earl,
Your husband being absent ?

JUDITH.

Ah, Matilda,
Thou know'st my weakness: feed not thou the flame
Which burns to madness here.

MATILDA.

'Tis Dorset's love
Must do that happy office. I, your handmaid,
Can only trim the alabaster lamp
Which holds the flame, and keep its brilliant light
Hid from the vulgar gaze.

JUDITH.

It cannot long,
I fear, be hidden from my rude husband's eye:
Then comes the storm all light and hope to quench.
Northumberland, good easy, shallow man,
Pillowed on love's connubial couch, dreams on
Of happiness, with all the sober pleasures
That home and a tame, fond, obedient wife
Can yield his simple heart. But let the snakes
Of jealousy once plant their venom'd sting
In his dull brain, he, like the lion roused
From hungry sleep, would roar his vengeance forth,
And mangle without mercy. All the court
Would ring with my disgrace, and on this head
The stern wrath of my kingly uncle fall !
Yet passion drags me on, though thy dark gulph,
Perdition, yawns before me !—
I'll go no further. Lay that robe aside :
I'll Osmond see no more.

MATILDA.

How long will you
Continue in that humour? Had you heard,
Like me, the night gone by, those praises which
He lavished on your charms, comparing all
That's beautiful in Nature with your beauty;
And then protesting that you beggared quite
His poor imagination, surely you
Would see him once again, if but to hear
The music of his love-inspired tongue;
For when he of my mistress speaks, his voice
Sounds like a rich-toned harp.

JUDITH.

And did he speak
So fondly of me?

MATILDA.

Did he, lady? Ay.
I cannot talk in his bewitching phrase,
Or you would bid me stand from morn to night
His fondness to repeat. I never heard
Your gruff-voiced, huge, unmannered husband yet
Pay your rare beauty one brief compliment.
He stands before you ever, in my thoughts,
Like one, born blind, placed on a mountain top,
Unconscious of the lovely scene outspread
In vain around him, with its pomp of woods,
Valleys, and lakes, and streams, and glittering towers.
Is he then fit to husband such a lady,—
'The rose of Normandy, the Conqueror's niece?
What is he but a bearded Saxon born? ⁽²²⁾
An Englishman?—a name that honour scorns
And brands with infamy.

JUDITH.

Too sadly true !

But how may I fling off this load of shame ?

MATILDA.

O, there are many ways.

JUDITH.

Name them.

MATILDA.

The best

And speediest I have knowledge of, is—death.

JUDITH.

What ! must I die ?

MATILDA.

No, lady, Heaven forefend.

JUDITH.

What then import thy words ? Thou canst not mean
My husband's murder ?

MATILDA.

Who of Norman race

Accounts it murder to dispatch a Saxon ?

These English slaves, though deemed of gentle line,

Driven for rebellion from their flame-scathed halls,

Make the green woods their home ; and, lady, now

Among our lords 'tis fashionable sport

To hunt them down with blood-hounds.

JUDITH.

Yet his death,

If wrought by me, I fear would on myself

Destruction bring ; for though a Saxon born,

He in the royal favour of the King

The foremost Baron stands.

MATILDA.

Are there not means

And instruments by which this deed of justice,—
Justice to your deserts and injured beauty,
Might be accomplished, and th' unconscious world
Account you innocent ?

JUDITH.

Art thou not bribed,
Bribed by this Osmond ?

MATILDA.

By the heart of truth
I answer, no ! My love for one so wronged
Is my sole motive ; and my aim is only
To see you happy, which can never be
While Waltheof lives.

JUDITH.

In that, at least, thou speak'st
A fatal truth.

MATILDA.

An instrument there is,
Or greatly do I err, who would with joy
Complete your wishes. I have marked him well.

JUDITH.

Whom dost thou mean ?

MATILDA.

Cardoc, a British slave
Bought by Almaric, merchant of your household.
A well-proportioned, sturdy loon is he,
And on his gloomy brow lurks dark revenge,
Some bloody deed to act. Full well know you
That all of his wild race the Saxons hate,
And thirst to take their lives.

JUDITH.

Why surely thou
Wast born above the rank of those who serve.

MATILDA.

Yes; but would serve my royal mistress ever.
It was my fate to be a captive slave
To Tosti, brother of the late King Harold,
In his wild, pirate wanderings on the coast
Of Normandy. My brother and my sire,
Who bravely fought, the caitiff rover slew
When made his prisoners. Have I not full cause
To hate the name of Saxon?—But your thoughts
Are absent from my tale.

JUDITH.

They are indeed.

MATILDA.

Say, shall I to your presence bring this slave?
For hither I can lead him unobserved,
If so it be your will. Northumberland
Is with his hounds to the New Forest gone:
How easy, on a swift steed, for this slave
To follow him; and, in some bower concealed,
A steel-bow straining to the arrow's head
The fleet shaft on its bloody errand send,
As Waltheof, chasing the wild stag, shall pass
Unheedful by. Who then shall dare suspect
You ever did him wrong?

JUDITH.

Why what a head
For precious mischief hast thou, to devise
With ease and quickness such a fearful deed!
In thy captivity,—for I did mark
Somewhat the tenour of thy hapless tale,
Thou must have learnt the soldier's blood-stained craft.

MATILDA.

O, most assuredly; I've witnessed scenes,

Many and oft, would turn e'en courage pale.
Women have been, in days gone by, renowned
For warlike deeds, and in their country's cause
Have struck a tyrant dead. In honest truth,
Ourselves are dearer to us than our country;
And he who tramples with the foot of power
On our desires and hopes, barring the way
To love and happiness, deserves to die
A traitor's death. Reck not how it be done,
So done it be.

JUDITH.

My spirit kindles with
Thy daring words.

MATILDA.

It shall be all on fire,
Ere I have ended. Lady, you've been made
A most unwilling tool of kingly craft,
A bond of state, given to the man your heart
Scorns and abhors, to bind him sure and fast
To the great Conqueror's interest.—Out upon him!
This Waltheof is the Saxons' worshipped god,
And at his altar you, the victim crowned
With flowers and pomp, hath the o'erweening King
Heartlessly sacrificed.—I see she yields.
Now is the time to bring this British slave.
Revenge and interest prompt me to the deed,
For Dorset's Earl hath promised gifts might tempt
A queen, if by my aid he win the Countess.

[*Aside, and Exit.*]

JUDITH.

Stay, stay Matilda. Ah! how shall I act
In this dark business? She hath spoken truth:
I *am* the victim to this horrid idol

Of Saxon worship. O, that wounds my heart
Like a fell serpent's fang! Then let him die!—
The far-adventuring merchant trusts his all
To seas, and winds, and storms: should tempests rise
And loud the billows roar, his trembling heart
A thousand fears assail; but when he views
His wealthy ship, through ocean's trackless depths
With her brave freight safe to the haven returned,
His terrors are forgotten. So will I
On murder's red and dangerous sea launch forth,
Fame, life, and honour venturing for my love:
If I outride the tempest and the surge,
Rich shall I be in all that time can yield
Worth our acceptance: should my frail barque founder—
Well, be it so; I too shall with it sink,
And then comes dark oblivion!—better far
To perish from remembrance, than to live
Disclaimed by hope and honour.

Enter Matilda and Hereward.

MATILDA—(*aside to the Countess.*)

The slave hath dared
To strike your merchant, for some fancied wrong
Done to a bondmaid, whom, it seems, he loves.
I've led him from his dungeon, where he lay
Waiting the hangman's halter. Promise freedom
And her he doats on, there's no peril which,
In his sad need, he will not risk to win
Such gracious favours, madam.

JUDITH.

This is no common slave. I see the pride
Of nobleness imprinted on his brow,
That suits not his low state; and in that eye

The fire of great desert shines, tempered with
The beams of modesty.—I blush to speak.

MATILDA.

Bow to the princess ; and if thou obey
Her bidding promptly, bright rewards will fall
Upon thee measureless.

JUDITH.

Thou art a slave.

HEREWARD.

Lady, I am.

JUDITH.

That is a wretched state
To those who better days have known, and lived
Esteemedly with merit ; and, if I
Err not, there was a time when fair renown
Flung on thee her rich beams, and thou didst walk
In honour's sunshine, with thy head erect—
A man among thy fellows.

HEREWARD.

Ay, and will

Do ever so.

JUDITH.

I must believe thee. But
To hold acquaintance with contempt and scorn ;
To rank below the beggar, wait on meanness,
Do worthless, servile offices for those
Who others serve for bread ; to be cast out
From the communion of all freeborn men
Though lowest in degree, thy master's dog
Caressed when thou art spurned ; to be worse fed,
Less cared for than the basest hound that howls
The winter night without the bolted gate
Of that stern master, yet not dare to lift
Thy voice against oppression ; subject still

To the vile lash of every fool above thee,
Unmulct though he in spleenful mood should plunge
His dagger in thy heart,—canst thou endure
A life like this?

HEREWARD.

No, gentle lady ; I
Would rather give this flesh to be the food
Of hungry wolves.

JUDITH.

That breathes a manly spirit.
I'll not suspect thee, nor believe that thou
Dost vaunt misseemingly. There is, perhaps,
Some maiden of thy choice ; one whom thy love
Would shield from every danger, and her path
Through life's dark pilgrimage bestrew with flowers ;
One whom thy burning passion holds more dear
Than the red tide which circles through thy veins :
Have I not guessed aright ?

HEREWARD.

Indeed thou hast.

JUDITH.

And she must brook the insults of thy state,
A sorrow-stricken bond-slave. What wouldst thou
Enact to win her freedom ?

HEREWARD.

Barter gladly
My life-blood for her ransom.

JUDITH.

Bravely spoken.
What wouldst thou do, were I that life to save
Thy rashness hath endangered, and to both
Give freedom,—give thee honour, wealth, and place,
Where thy deservings, like a goodly tree

Beside the gentle waters, might bring forth
Fruits goldenly ?

HEREWARD.

Princess, I would do all
Which in thy goodness thou couldst of me claim.

MATILDA—(*aside to the Countess.*)

The very fellow, madam, to our wish.
I judged him rightly. Fear you not to give
Full meaning to the brave design in hand.

JUDITH.

I have a foe—a deadly foe, that lies
Coiled like a serpent here ; he poisons all
My peace of mind, and on this heart's warm blood
Doth hourly feed. Thy skilful hand must draw
The monster forth : his death will be my life.

HEREWARD.

The cause of one so beautiful and good,
Must be the cause of justice and of truth.
Make me thy knight, and I will find a sword
Shall dauntlessly in combat smite this foe,
Though on his helm as haught a crest he wears,
And on his shield a heraldry as proud
As the most lofty Baron in the court.

MATILDA—(*aside to the Countess.*)

I knew he was a hero for our purpose.
I had a right discernment when I chose
This ready instrument.

JUDITH.

Be well advised.

Thou canst not meet him in the listed field,
Amid the concourse of mail-gleaming knights
And living splendour of fair ladies' eyes,
The champion of a lady. No ; his power

And lofty rank a nameless slave would scorn,
Even as the kingly mountain-bird disdains
To combat with the simple-singing wren.

HEREWARD.

The days have been, that in the embattled field
Victory her banner o'er my knightly crest
To shout of armies waved; and though my fame
Behind the heavy clouds of bondage lie,
I'll dash those clouds aside, and make the world
Start at its sudden glory!—
Who is this chieftain of baronial pride?
And what the name he bears?

JUDITH.

Must I pronounce it?

MATILDA—(*aside to the Countess.*)

That he will falter be not you afraid.
O, I can to his heart-core pierce, and read
Undaunted resolution written there
In characters of blood, plain as I see
The fires of his dark eye. Mark, how they flash,
Like summer lightning from the clouds of eve
Along the dim horizon. We shall hear
The thunder rolling shortly.

JUDITH.

Yes, I must
His hated name pronounce, or, Cardoc, thou
Wouldst in thy guessings, like a blind man, err,
Nor ever find the pathway to revenge;
For, as thou art a Briton, he must be
Thy foe as well as mine. It is—my husband—

HEREWARD—(*aside.*)

Thy husband? Heaven confound thy dark intents,
Thou base, and bloody-minded Norman wife!

JUDITH.

Northumberland the Saxon !—he who holds
Thee in vile bondage, he for whom thou toil'st
Slave of his meanest slaves. Thy arm must strike
In secrecy ; in ambush thou must wing
Thine arrows to his heart.

HEREWARD.

A thousand curses on thee fall for this !
Ten thousand fall on me, if I uplift
A hand to do him harm !

JUDITH.

Ha ! what said'st thou ?

MATILDA.

Dogs gnaw his heart-strings ! Have I been deceived ?
Outwitted by a slave ?

HEREWARD.

Misdeem'st thou me
So base, because a bondman's badge I wear,
That I must be a miscreant cut-throat ruffian ?
Dost thou not know that many a gallant heart,
All worthiness and honour, beats beneath
The weeds of bondage ? while the jewelled vest,
The golden spur, and coronal of pomp
Are oft like flowers, that hide beneath their bloom
The spotted toad and adder ?

MATILDA.

Here's a knave !

A dunghill reeking with the fumes of honour !
A swine pranked with a jewel in his snout !
A kennel-raker in a bishop's cope,
Reading a homily ! Out and away
With the foul ditch-dog ! Let a gallows cord
The snatch-crust strangle !

HEREWARD.

O, it cannot be
That thou shouldst seek thy noble husband's death,
Whom all men love. Thou dost but try my truth.

JUDITH.

Base lack-brain fool ! I cannot deign to pour
In thy dull ear the hopes, the rage, the pangs
That rack this heart. I wish him dead ! and thou
A fitting tool wert deemed, or we had not
Stooped thus to honour thee.

HEREWARD.

I scorn the office.
Let such abhorred distinctions be conferred
On those thou better than thy husband lov'st.
They merit such high service.

JUDITH.

Saucy groom !
How far have we o'ermeasured thy deserts.

MATILDA.

Measure them, madam, by the hangman's rope,
That lifts him to the highest forest tree ;
Where, swinging to and fro i' th' tainted winds,
The hungry ravens will croak his merits forth
As they pick clean his bones. Mad could I run
So to be cozened by a swinish slave !

HEREWARD.

These are your Norman women ! Ye are both
A glorious sample of your hell-black tribe,
Your nation's infamy and England's curse !

JUDITH.

Disserviceable, courageless, mean cur,
That lick'st the foot which spurns thee, and the rod
Which thy lack-linen back makes red with stripes !

No fire hast thou in thy tame, lukewarm blood,
Nor art thou with ambition's metal steeled ;
But like a sleepy, ice-bound river, which
Suffers all burdens unresistingly
Its still, cold waves to cross,—not like the sea
When stirred to wrath by the rebellious winds,
Dashing the navy on its shores a wreck
That dared to ride its billows. Well becomes
That badge of slavery thy submissive neck.
Boaster, thou hast no spirit !

HEREWARD.

Yes, false dame,
I feel a thousand spirits burning here,
Burning t' avenge, but not destroy thy lord.
What ! be a blood-dog, and at thy fell cry
Hunt down the noblest Saxon whom these Normans
Have spared to bless my country ? Let me pine
A dungeon slave where morning never came,
Water my drink and herbs my only food,—
Where I may never view that brighter day,
The sunlight of her eyes who is on earth
The fairest type of angel blessedness,
Rather than sink to that vile, loathsome thing
Which thou wouldst make me ! Freedom ? No :
Emancipation on *thy* terms, would be
The bondage of the damned ; and I should feel,
Though free to wander as the mountain winds,
Fettered with chains of fire.

MATILDA—(*aside.*)

I cannot stay
To hear the saintly whining of this dog :
It is a satire on my skill to read
Th' insidious heart of man. My mistress now

Must with him brave it out the best she may ;
And if she do not find some means to bend,
Or silence him for ever, she's no woman. [Exit.

JUDITH.

O, I am deep in malice with myself,
That I should listen to that wench's tale,
And make this stubborn fool my confidant,
Gulled by her silly judgment. [Aside.

Slave ! how darest
Thou on me with such bold amazement look ?

HEREWARD.

Can I but wonder to behold that form
Which breathes divinity, those eyes that dart
The lightning of the soul, that lovely face,
Rosy and bright as if the god of day
Had on young morn begot thee, and yet know
That in such beauty fiends can find a home
And turn it to a hell ? Murder thy lord !
Art thou not bound by every holy tie
To honour and obey him ? O, thy sex
Is ever in extremes. Women, when good,
Are mild and beautiful as angel forms,
And o'er man's darkened path shine like the moon
On winter's chilling storms—yet guiltless still
Of her inconstancy,—guiding his steps
To the sweet home of all that makes life blest ;
But when the shades of hell eclipse their light,
They taint us like a plague-spot !

JUDITH.

Poison of asps
Blister thy tongue ! Patience herself would turn
A maniac fury, to be taunted thus
By such a losel slave, whose every breath

Hangs on my will. ⁽²³⁾ Hence ! to a dungeon sink !
Companion there the vapour-bloated toad,—
Starve, and rot inch by inch ! *[Flourish within.*
By heaven, 'tis Waltheof's horn !
Vengeance befriend me ! *(shrieks.)* Ha ! off, villain, off !
Defile me not with thy polluted touch !
Unhand me ! Ho ! within there to my rescue !

*[She flings her scarf across Hereward, who stands
in mute astonishment, disorders her hair, and
runs to meet the Earl.*

Am I become the sport of menial slaves ?

*Enter Northumberland and Huntsmen, whom he
motions to retire.*

O, good my lord, defend me !

WALTHEOF.

I did hear

Cries of distress. What means this strange disorder ?

JUDITH.

Heaven sent thee hither to preserve my honour,
Insulted by yon base-begotten slave ;
Who with unmatched effrontery dared intrude
His hated presence here, and blast my ears
With a forbidden passion.

WALTHEOF.

What ! a slave

Attempt the honour of my virtuous wife ?
A noble lady, born of royal line ?

JUDITH.

Ay, see you not my scarf—still hanging on him—
Torn from me, and these locks disordered thus
With my wild struggles in his horrid grasp ?

HEREWARD—(*aside.*)

Deep shame be on thee, crafty Norman witch !
I'm caught at last within the Norman toils,
And by a woman,—if that name she merits.

JUDITH.

Call in thy train, and bid them lead him forth
To instant death. I faint, I die to look
On his detested visage.

WALTHEOF.

Nay, for that,
His visage may be looked on, and endured :
There's many a damsel on his eye would gaze
With pleasure, to behold her beauty there
Reflected in love's mirror. Can it be
That such audacious infamy should lurk
Beneath that countenance ? Such baseness must
In one, whose form so nobly doth surpass
His low estate, be rare and far to seek.

JUDITH.

Am I then doubted ? O, thou lukewarm chief,
How calm thou art, when thou shouldst be all fire !
Storming for instant vengeance on the wretch
Who in my person hath dishonoured thee,
Even where true honour feels the slightest scathe
Wound like the mad dog's fang ! Have I this hand,
Which princes sought in vain, on thee bestowed
To be insulted by thy lowest slaves
And not revenged ? Nay, doubted, as it seems !

WALTHEOF.

Doubt thee ? I doubt thee not ; yet do I stand
Lost in amazement at the daring crime
In one who looks all nobleness and truth.
A Saxon, too ! Were he a Norman born,

And thou of Saxon line, it had not thus
O'erwhelmed me with surprise.

JUDITH.

Trust not to looks.

The base deceiver pardon feigned to crave,
For stirring up contention in the household:
I little weened, when he approached me here,
To find him what he is.

HEREWARD—(*aside.*)

Little, indeed.

Thy lying lips at last have uttered truth,
Though artfully disguised.

WALTHEOF.

I've ever been,
In love and hate, plain spoken, and my aim
Is to be just to all. I have not deemed
Even the most censured guilty, till their crimes
Clear as the sun were proved ; therefore to me
It seems impossible he could insult
Thy lofty virtue, which above him shines
High as the stars in heaven, did I not know
'Twere more impossible that thou shouldst lie,
And falsely him accuse.

HEREWARD.

My gracious lord,
Thou art by every Englishman adored
That loves his country, and thy spotless name
Not even thy deepest, deadliest foe can taint.
Alas, that such should in thy house be found !
Noble Northumberland, it is in vain
To tell thee wherefore I was hither brought.
I could accuse, but thou couldst not believe.
Armed in my innocence, I am content

T' abide thine utmost wrath ; and when thou bidd'st
The death's-man on me do his fatal office,
I shall forgive thee with my latest breath,
And pray for blessings on thine honoured head.
My doom is fixed : but heed thou my last words,—
Beware thy Norman wife ! She knows no mercy,
For harder is she than the nether rock,
And her base heart swells like th' envenomed toad
Found hidden in its centre.

JUDITH.

Mark you this ?

Unmannered ruffian ! may all evil things,
All curses human nature e'er endured,
Light on thee, and thy death the prelude be
To fiercer plagues hereafter !

WALTHEOF.

Peace, dear wife :
Descend not to such wrath. Who waits within ?

Enter Attendants.

Hence to a dungeon lead this guilty man.
A crime hath he committed, which demands
His death at early dawn. [*Exit Hereward, guarded.*]

JUDITH.

Why not to-day ?—why not this very hour ?

WALTHEOF.

Be thou less eager, lady, for his blood.—
To him who sought my life, I'd not deny
A fitting time to make his peace with Heaven.

JUDITH.

Life ! what is life
Compared, my lord, with honour, whose deep wounds .

Can never heal? He who purloins my fame
Takes more than life, he takes my life's whole wealth,
And leaves me a poor bankrupt beggar, starving
On cold Suspicion's alms. But how camest thou
So timely from the forest sports? 'Tis not
Thy wonted hour.

WALTHEOF.

Base chastisement and shame
Be on those Norman Barons! who this day,
Amid yon forest, hunted down like beasts
My guiltless countrymen, and to the flames
Gave their loved homes, embosomed with the dove's,
Where the tall shades o'er Stour's bright waters bend.
And now they hither to the slave-mart drive
Their hapless captives, who, borne o'er the seas,
Shall ne'er again their native land behold.
With rage and sorrow stung I fled the chase,
Fled hawk and hound, and in his freedom left
The lusty stag to roam.

JUDITH.

Thou thankless man,—
Ungrateful to thy friends. Art thou not made
Earl of Northumberland, and, by thy marriage,
The kinsman of the King? But Saxons claim
Thy sole regard: the insults cast on me,
By a foul-spoken slave, thou count'st as nought
To the brief wailings of a herd of serfs,
When they exchange their masters.

WALTHEOF.

Wrong me not :
I mourn the insult deeply,—marvelling much
How such strange things should be. [Retires.]

Enter Matilda.

MATILDA.

Ha, Waltheof here?

Earl Osmond, madam, comes——

JUDITH.

Out on thee for a fool! a very fool!
A fitting instrument thy wisdom found.

MATILDA.

I was indeed——

JUDITH.

Peace, shallow-minded wench!

Had I lacked skill like thee, we had ere this
Been all undone. The Earl of Dorset here?
I cannot see him. Plead thou my excuse,—
I am disordered, ruffled——Ha! he comes.

Enter Osmond.

OSMOND.

A happy morning to Northumberland
And his fair Countess. Most unlucky day
To me, I wot, in finding this dull fool
Fast by the side of his all-beauteous wife,
When I did hope——How comes it thus, to find
Thy Saxon husband here? [*Aside to Judith.*

JUDITH.

O, ask me not.

The time, the scene ill fits me to explain.
My lord of Dorset, I must pardon crave;
Nor think me rude, since my perturbed mind
Some rest requires, that I awhile withdraw.

[*Exeunt Countess and Matilda.*

OSMOND.

Expected heaven to purgatory turned!

What sins have I committed, thus to be
Severely punished? Brave Northumberland,
You look disturbed and tristful. I intrude.

WALTHEOF.

Not so, my lord of Dorset. I did feel
Somewhat concerned to see how little truth,
Honour, or honesty, is to be found
In this dark, iron age. I deem the world
Grows every day more base.

OSMOND.

So thought our sires:
But from the few traditions I have gleaned
Of other times, the world progresses still
In all that renders it a goodly place
For man's abode,—at least, I count it so.
Nor has it reached that period when 'tis doomed,
If such a doom there be, to sink in years,
And totter with the feebleness of age.

WALTHEOF.

I speak of men——

OSMOND.

If all were good, one half mankind must starve,
Lacking employment. The whole priesthood live
By Sin and Death, and soon their craft would cease
But for old Beelzebub; yet do they still
Ungratefully revile him, heaping all
Man's villainy on his o'erladen back,
And our first parents' disobedience mourn,
Although that evil was the cause which gave
Their wealthy office being.
The judge on the tribunal, let him smite
The criminal, or won by bribery, set
The guilty free,—still doth he thrive by crime.

The physic-monger and the leech subsist
By sickness, wounds, and all the agonies
To which poor man is heir ;
While those cause-pleading clerks who throng the
courts, ⁽²⁴⁾

From malice, envy, and injustice reap
A golden harvest : even the King would be
Amerced of half his revenue, were there not
Offences in his subjects. ⁽²⁵⁾ Thus, 'tis plain,
That evil is a necessary good,
That virtue ever must companion vice
As yonder sun its shadow, or for aye
Lose its bright name and being.

WALTHEOF.

But, of late,
The stormy clouds of vice so dark and fast
Each other follow, that pure virtue's sun
Feebly, and far between, her faint light sheds.

OSMOND.

Men will be men, long as within their breasts
Those passions they were born with hold a seat :
Were it not so, this world would be indeed
A strange dull world to look on,—quite unfit
For me to struggle in.

WALTHEOF.

But when on man
The passions were bestowed, it was designed
He should, by that pure light which shines within,
Keep hourly watch and ward, with purpose firm
Their violence to restrain.

OSMOND.

I scorn to boast
Of victory o'er the passions : those who do,

I count as fools or knaves. How many vaunt
Of merits which they never yet possessed :
All inclination lacking to indulge
In certain habits, blindly they mistake
Mere non-desire for stern resisting virtue,
Then loudly boast how they in goodness shine.
On life's wild sea, through sunlight and through storm,
I to the ruling passion of the hour
Yield up the helm to steer where'er it lists—
Reckless of rock and shoal—my gallant bark.

WALTHEOF.

A slave, then, art thou to the worst of masters.
If such are all your Norman knights, no marvel
Those blood-storms so unsparingly are poured
On my poor countrymen.

OSMOND.

Thy countrymen
Merit but little grace, I ween, from those
Who are their masters.

WALTHEOF.

Ha ! what right have ye
To treat the Saxons as your abject slaves,
Who high in wealth and honour, power and fame,
Your equals stood ?—to thrust them from their homes
Till they with misery perish ?

OSMOND.

Right, my lord,—
That right which conquest o'er the conquered gives.

WALTHEOF.

Never was merry England conquered yet !

OSMOND.

How marvellous is it, then, our chiefs should dare
Do that which moves so sadly thy complaints.

WALTHEOF.

They dare do all that is most vile and base :
Oppression, rapine, lust, and flames, and blood,
Are ever their attendants. I proclaim
Proudly, that England ne'er was conquered yet
By all your Norman hordes, who hither flocked
Like eagles to the banquet of the slain.
William, our sovereign, he to whom I owe
A faithful liegeman's homage, whose just rights
God and my sword defend, by the free choice
And will of England was enthroned her King,
When on his head the sacred balm she poured,
By her great chiefs, with pealing trump and shout.
Yet then did ye your murderous work begin,
And Norman swords were dyed in Saxon blood.
That day is long since past : yet some there are
Who never will that fatal day forget.
But Normans now—one King o'er all—should meet
The English as kind brothers.

OSMOND.

True : as thou
Didst like a loving brother meet the Normans
With all thine armed Saxon hordes at York.
Talk'st thou of brotherhood ? Where was it when
Ye made the streets of that proud city flow
With streams of Norman blood ? not sparing one
Of all there found,—thy sovereign's bravest friends.
Talk'st thou of loyalty ? Where was thy faith
When thou didst join the invading host of Denmark,
And all the north to insurrection stirred,
Proclaiming for thy king the Etheling Edgar ?
Till on the banks of Tees the Conqueror met
Thy rebel bands ; who fled, and left thee crouching
For mercy at the generous victor's feet ?

WALTHEOF.

Taunt me not with the patriot deeds I've done :
It chafes my blood. For my loved country's peace
I to King William bowed, and sheathed my sword.
Free did he grant me——

OSMOND.

Pardon. Yes, I know
'Twas granted thee, and honours too, as proud
As any faithful Norman Earl hath won.
Northumberland beware ! Thou art the last
Great chief of Saxon line, and soon thy light,
Son of the morn, exalted high to lead
A starry host, may be in blood put out.
Clouds of mistrust will ever darkly hang
On a king-pardoned rebel's brightest deeds. [Exit.

WALTHEOF.

I *am* the last, the more sad for my country.
Suspected, haughty Norman ? called a rebel ?
Thou liest ! I was no rebel, for I had not sworn
Allegiance to King William,—am no rebel,
In act, or word, or thought,—
And yet mistrusted ! Well, if doomed to perish
Like all my gallant friends, O grant, kind Heaven !
My country by my death may rise to glory.
Sweet England ! if my blood could yield thee peace,
This heart would gladly all its veins outpour,
And the last sigh these lips breathed forth should be,—
God bless thee, noble England !

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Forest by moonlight.—A small Encampment at a distance.*

Enter Ben-Zadoc and Tobias, meeting.

BEN-ZADOC.

TOBIAS, faithful steward of my household,
Have not those barbasons, old Satan's imps,
Brought in yet any slaves?

TOBIAS.

All in good time,
My lord and master. Those blood-tigers, whom
Thou hast allured from the adventuring bands
That seek this sea-girt isle for battle spoil, ⁽²⁶⁾
To drive, in night excursions, biped flocks
Into our slave-fold, are a desperate crew.
They glean and gather, as we wander on
From place to place, full many a lusty hind,
And useful artisan, and damsel fair.
Thou wilt replenish half the mariners' ships
Of Bristow's crowded mart, and her rich merchants,
Who traffic in the sale of human flesh,
Will count their gold bezants to fill thy purse. ⁽²⁷⁾

BEN-ZADOC.

By Shiloh! who shall yet on David's throne
Reign o'er the Gentile, I have struggled long,
Like Jacob with the angel, for a blessing,
And it is come at last. Driven out from Spain

By Christian dogs, we to these isles o' th' sea
For refuge fled, where now th' all-wasting sword
Reapeth its harvest; for these Gentile tribes
Make war upon each other, and they lie
In wait amid the woods, and caves, and rocks,
With slaughter-weapons in their hands to smite,
And fill the land with blood.

TOBIAS.

And thou, too, reap'st
A plenteous harvest.

BEN-ZADOC.

Ay, Tobias, ay.

Many a brave reprisal do I win,
For all the sad despoiling I've endured.
As pleasant to my heart is it to hear
The groans and wailings of those Christian slaves
By us to bondage led, as 'tis to list
The clink of gold dropped in my money-bags.
I loathe the Gentiles, who with bitter scoffs,
Fines and imprisonment, and foul robbery vex
The holy seed of Abraham. These wild bands,
Who for men-stealers I have hired, know not
Remorse or pity. And in this I act
As Moses bids, who all the heathen gave,
Wherever found, in city or in field,
To be by us and by our children held
From age to age in thraldom. ⁽²⁸⁾ By the horn
Of royal David——

TOBIAS.

Nay, my lord and master,
Swear not by that, for David's horns, thou know'st,
Were scurvy gifts which Michal his first wife,
And Absalom his son, on him bestowed.
The first stout pair the King wore willingly;

The second, far more odious, he flung off,
Making his ten poor concubines all widows.

BEN-ZADOC.

I mean his horn of power—— (29)

TOBIAS.

What, that with which
He gored to death the Hittite, brave Uriah,
Having first made him horned like himself?

BEN-ZADOC.

Speak thou not thus irreverently, Tobias.—
But I would say, how it doth make me glad
That those who fall at night-time in the nets
Of our far-roaming prowlers——

TOBIAS.

O, my lord,
Believe me, we have tarried here too long.
The village which last night they burnt to ashes,
The flames whereof glared redly o'er these woods,
May lead to a discovery.

BEN-ZADOC.

Heed thou not :

To-morrow will we journey to the west.
Trouble encompasseth this land, where Death
Steeps his white ribs in blood. Then let who may
Become our spoil, suspicion ever falls
On Norman or on Saxon, each believing
His hidden foe hath unawares surprised
And cut the captive off; whilst we pass on
Unnoticed and unscathed.

TOBIAS.

Abraham protect
His injured race! Let any who are caught
But once escape, or from their stubborn necks

Those iron collars slip, our necks will soon
With such strong gyves be galled, as shall uplift
Us to a pitch far higher than my aims.
My poor ambition seeketh not acquaintance
With soaring crows and ravens.

BEN-ZADOC.

Should those base slaves—
Our valiant men of war gone forth to prowl
Through the dark wilderness—their selves arouse
To battle for their freedom, we must draw
The sword of slaughter, as great Joshua did,
Nor one o' th' unclean and Christian Gentiles spare.
Men, maidens, wives, and children, all shall yield
Their throats to our keen knives. Hark ! hear'st thou not
The distant tramp of numbers ?

TOBIAS.

Jacob's angel
Be near to save us !—'tis, no doubt, our foes.
These Christians—may the curse of Mezroe blight them !
Have our retreat discovered.

BEN-ZADOC.

Nay, thy fears
Deceive thee. Be of courage, man, nor quake ;
But gird thy loins up, like a valiant son
Of Israel's chosen race, and laugh to see
Thy brand made red,—red to the very hilt
In Christian blood. The Lord of Hosts for us
Will fight, if peradventure there be need,
As in the days of old.

TOBIAS.

I am a man
Of feeble loins, and little strength for war ;
Yet if I had a host of fighting knaves,

With buckler and with spear, about me placed,
I should, by Judah's lion ! feel as bold
As David, when he slew the great Philistine.

BEN-ZADOC.

Those sounds, I deem, are but the homeward steps
Of some wild band of ours.—

I trust they have brought back a goodly store
Of living moneys ⁽³⁰⁾ and of Gentile coin,
With gold and silver vessels to increase
My hoards of merchandise.—O, how I joy
To make a spoil of these Egyptian dogs,
Who still oppress and scoff us.

[*Exit.*

TOBIAS.

Master of mine,
I live in perilous dread that these bold deeds
Of nightly plunder will, ere long, on all
Our pates fall heavily. O, would I had
That pilgrim-angel journeying by my side,
Who guarded my old namesake when he went
To wed a demon's bride in heathen lands,
And magic heart of that strange monster-fish
He in the Tigris caught ; that when approach
The fierce Philistines of this island, I
Might cast it on the fire, and with the smoke
Those devils frighten from me.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Forest; the moon
not visible.*

Enter Hereward and Zalmira, in rich habits.

HEREWARD.

Did I not bid thee be of courage, when
I was to prison dragged ? and now, behold,

We are in safety, far beyond the walls
Of that strong Norman city. Yet I grieve
To be compelled to fly, ere I could find
Or learn in what dark dungeon lies my brother,
The much-wronged Earl of Mercia.

ZALMIRA..

I would fain
Rest here awhile, o'erwearied with our flight.
And tell me, as I on this bank recline,
How from thy dungeon-chains thou didst escape,
And who conducted us at evening hour
Beyond the city gates.

HEREWARD.

Harold it was,
A freeman of Northumberland's good Earl,
A brother of our high Masonic Order,
Who Normans doth abhor. It is to him
For safety and these shining habits we
Are, my Zalmira, debtors. Soon my band,
That lurks amid this forest, he will join ;
Nor have we far our tristing-place to reach,
Where fiery-mettled steeds impatient wait
To bear us onward for St. Albans' shrine.

ZALMIRA.

Never did I, O Liberty ! till now
Thy blessings truly feel.

HEREWARD.

'Tis ever thus :
Pleasures are doubly pleasing bought with pain.
The sun more glorious shines when from the storm
His beams break forth in splendour, and the flowers
A richer fragrance yield when morning winds
Shake the cold dews of midnight from their leaves ;

While to the pilgrim who hath wandered long
Amid the lonely desert's burning sands,
When he, with weary step, the prospect wins
Of some delightful land of groves and streams,
Earth wears the face of heaven.

ZALMIRA.

'Tis joy to hear
The early hymn of forest birds when morn
Comes in her freshness forth, and all the flowers
Look up to her with gladness; or the song
Of summer's pilgrim-minstrel who the moon
Doth nightly woo, though in the southern skies
She coldly keeps, far off, her lonely way;
Or merry echoes of th' autumnal horn,
Pealing through golden woods. But O, how far
More spirit-stirring sounds thy mountain voice,
Sun-glorious Liberty!

HEREWARD.

Ay, and her voice, my own Ionian maid,
Shall, like th' Archangel's last dread trumpet, ring
Throughout the land, awakening from the grave
Of foul oppression England's slumbering sons;
Who at the sound shall fling the death-like bonds
Of slavery off, and from the east and west,
The north and south be gathered, as one man,
To the great battle of my country's freedom.

ZALMIRA.

O happy tidings, prove they but right true.

HEREWARD.

As shall the sun to-morrow's dawn arise
To glad the nations, so the brighter day
Of Liberty shall break, and o'er the storms
And darkness of grim tyranny outpour

Its full-tide glory. In the abbey halls
Of famed St. Alban, noble spirits meet
The gallant-bearing enterprise to plan ;
Which shall from hence the Norman Bastard drive,
And “ England’s Darling ” seat on England’s throne.
Eager am I to meet them.

ZALMIRA.

Let us on :

Rest hath revived me. I, a Grecian maid,
Feel at the name of freedom every vein
Throb with heroic joy. My soul, like thine,
Longs for the glorious strife, longs to behold
Thy country from barbarian bondage freed ;
Nor will I shrink, in such a cause, with thee
Bravely to fight, to conquer, or to die. ⁽³¹⁾

HEREWARD.

Joy of my soul ! then onward will we go.

ZALMIRA.

See ! from her cloudy tabernacle comes
The moon, as if in haste, like some kind friend
To guide us weary-wandering pilgrims hence,
The shadowy forest lighting up with pomp
No kingly hall may rival. Dearly loved
Art thou by him, sweet moon, who his guitar
Beneath the woodbine-wreathed lattice strikes
To her that breathless in her joy doth list
His passionate melody,—by those who dance
To castanet and lute in myrtle groves
The summer eve away ; but dearer still
Art thou, fair Dian, to the sea-boy who
Keeps lonely watch, upgazing on thy face
With thoughts of home and days of early love,
When thou didst smile on his wild frolic glee

Amid his native bowers; and yet more dear
Art thou to him who in the desert waste
An exile wanders with fierce stranger bands,
As o'er the voiceless hill and rocky peak
Thou in thy fulness risest, Solitude,
Paying thee silent worship, like an Æthiop
Bowing before young beauty's radiant eye,
Enrapt in adoration. Hark!—I heard
A rustling in the forest.

HEREWARD.

Fear thou not :
Nor wolf nor bear shall harm thee.

Enter Hexulph, with a band of Ben-Zadoc's Rovers.

HEXULPH.

A prize !

ZALMIRA.

Christ, for thy mercy ! what wild men are these ?
Fierce savages that dwell in woods and caves ?
O, yet for pity——

HEXULPH.

With them hence ! Away !
No waste of time in wailing and entreaty.
These somewhat may repair our loss to-night
Of booty, taken from us by that gang
Of rascal, plundering Saxons whom we met
Crossing Stagwealtham moor.

HEREWARD.

Dogs ! robbers ! off !

HEXULPH.

Away ! away ! [Hereward and Zalmira dragged off.

These, if I guess aright,
Will to Ben-Zadoc wealthy ransom yield. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*The Interior of Ben-Zadoc's Tent. Piles of rich Merchandise, &c.*

Enter Ben-Zadoc and Tabitha.

TABITHA.

Talk not to me ! Pack up thine ill-got wealth,
Thy merchandise, thy hoards of gold and gems,
Or they will soon be scattered by the spoiler.
Harness thy slaves for travel, strike thy tents ;
Call in those sons of Belial, those wild fiends,
Sent forth to kidnap, plunder, and destroy.
The country will, ere long, be up in arms,
And we shall be cut off : but pass not thou
Through any city till we reach the gates
Of ancient Bristow,—mark me, 'twill be dangerous.
Why how thou loiter'st ! Come, bestir thyself,
For I do live in hourly terror here.

BEN-ZADOC.

Nay, good Tabitha, be advised : I swear
By Jacob's pillar, there is nought to fear.

TABITHA.

Nought, didst thou say, to fear ? when shrieks, and cries,
And wailings nightly through the forest ring
Of wretches hither dragged ?—when every part
Of the round heavens I from my tent have seen
Red as if morn were breaking,—red with fires
That told too plainly where thy bands had gathered
To spoil the suffering Gentile ?

BEN-ZADOC.

Surely thou
Canst feel no pity for these outcast Gentiles,
Who heap revilings, scorn, and bitter wrongs
On all of Abraham's race ?

TABITHA.

No; but I feel
Some pity for myself, and would not fall
A prey to their unmerciful revenge.
I tell thee if, Ben-Zadoc, thou shouldst be
Discovered by the dwellers of this land,
We thall be hewn in pieces, and our limbs,
Blood-dropping, hung o'er tower and city-gate,
The jest and scoff of gazing Gentile crowds.
Would we had never fled Iberia's clime !
But in some Moorish kingdom dwelt secure ⁽³²⁾
Among the friendly Arabs, who, like us,
Sprang from our holy father Abraham's loins.

BEN-ZADOC.

Then should I not have gathered such a store
Of silver and of gold, nor driven these flocks
Of human cattle to the mart, nor kept
Such valiant bands to go forth armed for plunder.

TABITHA.

Thou simple one of Israel, say for whom
Hast thou these riches gathered ? for the first
Fierce horde that comes upon us, and the hour
Which brings them here, Ben-Zadoc, I forecast,
Is not far off ; but thou, perverse and headstrong,
Wilt not receive good counsel. Tarry, then,
To thy undoing, but *I* hence will go :
No power shall stay me.

BEN-ZADOC.

Nay, for one night more :
For one last booty which I yet expect—

TABITHA.

Not for the wealth, thou lucre-greedy man,
Of Solomon's golden temple ! Ay, the last—

'Twill be indeed the last ! Must I apprise thee
That evil is approaching, and thou take
No heed to mend thy ways ? Then be it known,
That gem oracular which hath been kept
As a blest relic of the Aaronic breastplate,
Kept by my priestly sires from age to age,
And to my care intrusted when the last
Of all my father's sons a martyr perished
In flames 'mid proud Seville, that omened stone
Prophetic warning gives me to be gone. ⁽³³⁾
Behold and tremble !

[*Taking a small Casket from her bosom, and opening it.*

See, how dim and clouded
Is all its lustre. Mark me, and be wise :
I can discern a host of Christian forms,
With gleaming swords and spears——See ! see ! they glide
Between those clouds that shade the radiance which
Burns with eye-blinding glory here, when Heaven
Smiles prosperously upon our ancient house.
Ha ! now a battle comes ; and o'er the mirror
A blood-red lustre rushes.

BEN-ZADOC.

Gaze no more.

My veins grow icy as I hear thee speak.

I will remove this night. [*Shouts without.*

Hark ! our wild bands !

'There is the sound, Tabitha, of much spoil
In those brave shouts. My blood flows warm again.

Enter Hexulph.

HEXULPH.

We have to-night, old Jew, been roughly handled
By some infernal Saxons, who, base dogs,
With well-armed numbers, far out-numbering us,

Have villainously taken all the spoil
Which, in our farewell forage, we had gleaned
With honest industry.

TABITHA.

Mark that, Ben-Zadoc :
Thy first mishap. An evil omen this
Of what's foredoomed to follow.

BEN-ZADOC.

O, I swear
By Esau's birthright, 'tis a grievous loss !
Sorely it chafeth me. But what are these ?

HEXULPH.

A little fruit we gathered in the woods,
Whose shining husk, as thou mayst see, doth promise
A wealthy core for ransom, if well peeled.

BEN-ZADOC.

We'll strip them of their gear—ay, of their skin,
And lay their quivering heart-core bare, if they
Yield not a speedy and an ample ransom.
Aha, fair damsel ! art thou mine again ?
And without purchase, too ? Come, come ; there's yet
Some luck in store—ay, Jacob's ten-fold luck ;
For I once more shall make a goodly price
Of those bright eyes and dainty blushes, which
So well become that cheek. I'll double now
Thy value in the mart, unless this chief
Pay ransom like a king. What wealth hast thou
Of field and flock, of gold and precious gems,
Wherewith to purchase freedom for thyself,
And this thy gay companion ?

HEREWARD.

I have one,
One only boon,—a well-accustomed sword.

BEN-ZADOC.

That will avail thee nothing here, sir knight.
Hexulph ! off with his weapon, and those bonds
That bind him fast unloose ; then watch without,
And still be near at hand.

[Hexulph takes Hereward's sword, unbinds his
arms, and exit with his followers. Ben-Zadoc
goes towards the back part of the tent.

Prepare within,
My cherubs of the rack and fire, your sports
To amuse a stubborn captive. 'Tis in vain
To plead pretended poverty to me :
Thy lofty bearing speaks thy lofty rank.
If not about thy person, still must thou,
Christian, have stores of wealth.

HEREWARD.

Ay, but not one
Brass stica, Jew, to bless thy itching palm.

BEN-ZADOC.

The leprosy of Miriam blanch thy limbs !
A miser, and so young ? Dost thou not know
That love of gold is love of bitter care ?
That riches pass away, as o'er the deep
The swift barque glides, leaving no track behind
To tell where it hath been ?

HEREWARD.

What ! doth the Devil
His darling vice condemn ?

BEN-ZADOC.

Then be informed,
Thou Christian dog, none unredeemed go hence,
Save to a living death,—eternal thralldom.
Proud-hearted captive ! we have many ways

To wring his treasures from the miser's grasp.
Stripes, fire, and water ; irons heated red
To blind the eye-sight ; flaying off the skin,
And a salt bath that tickles the raw flesh
Like a green couch of nettles. Ordeals strong,
I own, the truth of those to prove who plead
Guiltless of wealth.

HEREWARD.

Patience be kind, or I
Shall choke with rage. Why, thou abhorred man-stealer !
Thou caitiff hell-dog Jew ! who, if thou hadst
Thy just deservings, wouldst not 'scape unbrained
Another hour to fright and blast mankind,
Thy portion be with Judas in the land
Of darkness and of wailing, and thy bones
Moulder on some heath-gibbet ! I have heard
Of thy foul fame, and wolf-like dost thou skulk
Here in the forest ; but stern vengeance soon
Shall track thy blood-marked footsteps.

BEN-ZADOC.

Gentle Christian,
I thank thee for thy blessings : they proceed
From the kind feelings of a Christian heart.
Elisha's curse, which on those children fell
Who mocked his age, betide thee ! Come : thy gold,
Thy gems ; disclose thy hoards——

HEREWARD.

What right hast thou,
Who liv'st on sufferance in a Christian land,
To claim redemption for a freeborn Saxon ?

BEN-ZADOC.

The right of retribution, hated fool !
All of thy faith, rejected by our God,

Heap on our heads indignity and shame.
There is no wrong, despite, or agony
That man can feel, but 'tis your sport to make
The children of the promised seed endure.
Driven by the heathen, from our holy land
We wander yet awhile, till Shiloh comes
With his red garments dyed in Gentile blood ;
Who all the nations shall beneath his feet
Tread down like mire, and from our temple spread
His sun-transcending splendours o'er the world,
Making its proud kings tremble !—But I stray,
Warmed with great Israel's glory. Still, where'er
We tabernacle, ye with vile extortion,
Robbery, and murder, from us wrest our thrift,
Our little hard-earned all, for which we toil,
Like wretched slaves, in obloquy and fear.
And shall we not revenge on you these wrongs,
When in our power ye fall ? Revenge is mine !
And I will quaff her blood-filled cup of joy,
Ay, to the very lees. Thy gold, thy gold
Deliver quickly, or on yonder fire
Shalt thou be bound, till from those blackened limbs
Thy boiling vein-drops ooze. Within, there ! Fling
Those curtains back, and show this Gentile dog
His doom, if he refuse.

[The back part of the tent is drawn up, and discovers an inner tent, with an iron chair and chains elevated over a fierce fire in the centre ; executioners, with various other instruments of torture, standing on either side.]

ZALMIRA—*(kneeling.)*

O, hear me speak—
Have pity on us ! We no treasures bear

About our persons, for we are, like thee,
Wayfaring strangers, far—yea, far from home,
And flying for our lives. Yet let us now
Depart uninjured, and hereafter wealth
Beyond thine avarice shall our ransom pay.
Then mercy, mercy show !

BEN-ZADOC.

When did a Christian
Show any mercy to a helpless Jew ?
I have no confidence in words of fear.
There is no truth, integrity, or justice
In any of your dealings with the seed
Of holy Abraham. No : when far from hence
I shall be scoffed, and mocked, and set at nought.
Then where may ye be found ? Ay, where, indeed ?
And e'en if found I dared my rights to claim,
I should be spit on, buffeted, and led
To torments and to death. Ye have concealed
Your riches in the forest : tell me where,
Or to yon fire ! Come forth, my men of war.

HEREWARD.

One thing have I, thou blood-fell Jew, which yet
May work our ransom.

[*Rushes to the side-opening of the tent, and loudly
sounds a horn, which he takes from his belt.*]

TABITHA—(*who has been gazing on her casket.*)

O forbear ! forbear !

Ben-Zadoc, let these stiff-necked Christians go.
Wealthy or indigent, hence let them speed,
For the prophetic gem gives fatal sign.
Thrice hath a lurid stream of blood bedimmed
Its sunbright surface, and thrice from it glared

The crimson flash of wrath. O, let them fly !
A curse is falling on us.

HEREWARD.

Yet they come not.—

O my Zalmira ! 'tis for thee I feel
The bitterness of death. To leave thee here,
A slave again, in this vile robber's power——

ZALMIRA.

Thy dagger shall release me from his bonds.

BEN-ZADOC.

Let omens threaten, treasures will I have.
Ransom or death !

Enter Hexulph and Rovers.

Lead onward to the fire !

[As Hexulph and his followers seize Hereward, they tear open his vest, and Ben-Zadoc observes on his bosom the symbols of his Masonic Order : he starts with astonishment, gives, unobserved by others, the sign, which Hereward returns.]

BEN-ZADOC.

God of my father Abraham ! can it be ?
As my soul liveth, 'tis a friend—a brother !

[Ben-Zadoc rushes to embrace Hereward, who puts out his hand and prevents him.]

Safe art thou hence to go, and good speed wait thee !
Thou and the damsel both depart in peace,
Uninjured and unransomed.

[All the other Characters appear lost in astonishment.]

HEXULPH.

Death and hell !

Why what new freak is this ?

BEN-ZADOC.

It matters not
To thee. Keep guard beyond the outer tents.

HEXULPH.

A brother ? Much more like a son, if age
Might be a voucher for their kinship.
Nought then of profit will by him be won :
Fool for my toil was I to bring him here !

[*Exeunt Hexulph and Rovers.*]

HEREWARD.

Thy deeds are dark, and red thy hands with blood.
Thou hast disgraced thine Order ! Still I see,
Such is the power of our mysterious craft,
It even thy tiger-heart can tame to mercy,
And its mild influence on thy rugged nature
Shows like the summer-flower that sweetly blooms
In loneliness upon the desert rock ;
While o'er that stormy brow its radiance darts
Like a rich sunbeam flung in all its strength
Athwart th' outdashing cataract's foamy wrath,
Lighting Hope's rainbow, which faint promise gives
Of better deeds to come. Who then shall dare,
Save superstitious Ignorance, to gainsay
Our blessed Order ! Brightest gift of Heaven !
Whose glory hath, even from the earliest years,
Along the dark and blood-stained course of time
Shone like those beauteous streams of golden light
Which, o'er the sun-forsaken wilds that stretch
Far round the Pole, in gorgeous lustre flash,—
Gazed at with awe and wonder, but whose source
Lies hidden where no mortal may approach. ⁽³⁴⁾
Our Institution is the Dove of Peace,
That in its sacred Ark, well-guarded, nestles,

When Persecution's flood and storm without
Threat ragingly ; and safe, despite of surge
And howling whirlwind, hath that mystic Ark
Rode bravely out the tempest, and shall still
Bear all its inmates on, 'till Time's deep tide,
Dried up and passed away, hath left it fixt
On bright Eternity's Elysian shores.

BEN-ZADOC.

Dark have my deeds been ; but these evil times——

HEREWARD.

Thou takest a base advantage of the times :
There is *no* time in which a brother-craft
Will, if he be a worthy member, do
An evil act. But thou hast done such deeds
Of violence, that thy name is aye accursed.
Thy dark renown, like an eclipse, o'erspreads
The frightened land, and swiftly comes the hour
Of dreadful retribution. Here, behold !
I on this bosom the bright symbols wear
Of my great office in our sacred Order,
To which thou dost unworthily belong.
Repent,—there may be yet forgiveness : but
To win it, thou must contrite deeds perform,
Or be an outcast from our guarded pale.

[Shouts and clashing of swords without.]

TABITHA.

They come ! they come ! Woe, woe upon thy head ;
The evil omens are fulfilling now !

Tobias, with Slaves of both sexes, rush in.

TOBIAS.

My lord and master, we are all undone !
I warned you of the danger ; still you turned

An adder's ear to good advice. The tents
Are hemmed by furious bands in war-array.
There's no escape. Your mighty men are fallen,
And their bold captain, Hexulph, too is slain.
O, we are all dead men !

*Enter Harold and several of Hereward's Soldiers,
with their swords bloody.*

HEREWARD.

Harold ! my brother, my deliverer ! thou
Art timely come.

HAROLD.

It joys me, good my lord,
To rescue thee a second time from death.
Thy band was met by those who sought to find,
Stung by their wrongs to madness, this fell nest
Of savage hornets in these woods concealed,
What time the echoes of thy horn were heard.

VOICES WITHOUT.

Where is this Jew ? Bring the slave-merchant forth !
Burn him alive !

HEREWARD.

Go, Harold, and appease
Their noisy wrath ; and keep them back till I
Come forth to satisfy their just demands.

[Exeunt Harold and Soldiers.]

BEN-ZADOC—*(falling on his knees.)*

O ! by that Power whom all my fathers worshipped,
That Power whom as a Christian thou adorest,
And by those sacred symbols on thy breast,
Thus bowing low, my lord, do I implore
Thy mercy to a brother. Let my life,
And all the lives of these who with me kneel,
Be precious in thy sight.

HEREWARD.

A brother? I

Disown thy fellowship, and marvel how
Thou ever shouldst have been a brother made.
It is as if the bloody wolf had sought
To sleep in friendship with the folded flock.

BEN-ZADOC.

I have not always been what thou hast found me.
There was a time when no blood-guiltiness
My soul had stained, when I was kind and gentle ;
But the foul wrongs, the insults, and the tortures
Which from the Iberian Christians I endured—
I and my nation, made this heart to burn,
Like Tophet's nether fires, for wild revenge—
Revenge on every false, unfeeling Christian.

HEREWARD.

Well, thou, Ben-Zadoc, now shalt mercy find,
And from a Christian. I thy life will spare,
And all the lives of those who kneel before me :
But for the hapless captives in thy tents,
Thou shalt no further drag them,—they are free.
And now thy wealth, thy merchandise, thy stores
Of ill-got plunder, all shall be resigned,
Given back to those whom thy land-pirate hordes
Have cruelly despoiled.

BEN-ZADOC.

What, all my wealth?

O God of Isaac and of Jacob, all?

HEREWARD.

All, save three hundred marks, with which
By lawful merchandise thou mayst obtain
The honest means of life.

BEN-ZADOC.

Woe worth this night !

Sorely am I bereaved.

HEREWARD.

Ha ! lurks there still

That devilish avarice in thine iron heart ?

The time is past which would the truth have proved

Of thy repentance. Thou art powerless now,

And virtueless 'tis feared ; and therefore we,

By right of that time-honoured office which

To us belongs, thus from thy bosom tear

The badge of our bright Order, which so long

Thou hast disgraced, and cast thee out for aye

And ever from our brotherly communion.

Retire for safety to yon inner tents.

[Exeunt Ben-Zadoc and household.]

Some would our Order brand, for thy dark deeds,

With infamy : as well might they charge guilt

On a pure river, fringed with groves and flowers,

Wherein some woe-encumbered wretch hath flung

Himself, and madly perished.—

Now then, Zalmira, for St. Alban's towers.

Our dangers and our joys have been like shadows

Coursing the sunbeams o'er the mountain's side.

ZALMIRA.

O, let us hence : I long to end these cares.

Anguish is turned to joy, despair to hope ;

Yet in some darker storm again may fade

Her radiant bow of promise :—

So in the deserts of the East, where all

Is desolation, o'er the pilgrim comes

The vision of bright lakes, with sunny isle,

City, and tower, and palm-tree groves, and fields,

Empurpled with Elysian fruits and flowers ;
But when his feet those magic shores have reached,
The strange enchantment of the desert-fiend ⁽³⁵⁾
Fades from his tearful sight, while round him spread
A land of drought, and skies of burning brass. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Room of State in the Abbey of
St. Alban's.*

Enter the Earls of Norfolk and Hereford.

NORFOLK.

Sweet Isabelle of Hereford is mine,
Spite of this ducal tyrant, who opposed
The smooth course of my wishes, like a rock,
Rugged and vast, which now the gathered flood
Shall undermine, till down it headlong sinks
Amid the dark abyss of our revenge.

HEREFORD.

But, Norfolk, we must mingle with these Saxons
To aid our purpose. As a friend I speak ;—
Let not thy greatness, pride of blood, or courage
Break forth in stern disdain or haughty words ;
But calmly let our great design flow on
And with their gallant expectations blend,
As two proud rivers join, when rocks nor winds
Oppose their friendly union.

NORFOLK.

Be it so.

I frankly own that I am given to wrath,
And few words stir my choler when withstood.
Patience and mild forbearance may be deemed
In a poor beadsman an especial grace,
But I no kindred to such virtues own.

Yet, though these Saxons are our scorn and hate,
I with far deadlier enmity do loathe
This haughty Conqueror ; and to win revenge,
With empire crowned, my spirit shall be curbed
To such meek tameness, that—my honour safe—
I to their gusty passions low will bend,
As the green sapling to the passing storm.

HEREFORD.

Thou know'st, t' allure the Saxon chiefs around
Our rebel banners, we the crown must place
On their young darling Edgar's head ; but when
This soft unwarlike boy, who is unfit,
In these fierce, busy times of strife and blood,
To wrestle with the unceasing storms of state,
As the frail skiff to ride the tempest surge,—
When this poor mammet prince, this king of straw,
Hath served our purpose, we will him uncrown,
Ascend his throne, and then the south shall be
Thy kingdom, and the northern counties mine.

NORFOLK.

O, 'tis a gallant plot. Ten thousand swords,
Norman and Saxon, wait our trumpet's call.
Is Fritherig, the good Abbot here, apprized
In full the tenour of our noble plan ?

HEREFORD.

Ay, far as doth concern Prince Edgar's cause.
With speed hath he to Scotland's distant court
Sent for the Etheling, that his presence may
Rouse every Saxon in the land to arms ;
But little weens he that our swords shall cleave
The imperial crown in twain. As little dreams
Northumberland, drawn here by th' Abbot's craft,
Of his designs or ours.

Enter two Servants.

FIRST SERVANT.

Right noble Earls,
We wait to bring you to the banquet-hall.

NORFOLK.

On, then ; I long to meet our gallant friends.

[Exeunt Norfolk, Hereford, and Servant.]

SECOND SERVANT.

These are no pilgrims come to worship here
At altar and at shrine, who wait for dole
From buttery-hatch. O, there is mighty stir
Towards some great doings. Would I knew their
meaning !

Our Abbot is a man for stratagems,
And plots, and deep designs. I have a head
Myself for these brave things, were I but trusted.

Enter Third Servant, as from a long journey.

What tidings from the north ? Whom dost thou seek ?

THIRD SERVANT.

Tell my Lord Abbot, I would——

SECOND SERVANT.

All in vain ;

He may not now be seen by any one
Of low degree. Come, in my private ear
Whisper thy secrets. I am trusted, man,
With all affairs important ; doubt me not.

THIRD SERVANT.

O, I am wearied, jaded with our speed.
Two horses have I left behind to gorge
The hungry crows ; and, faith ! the third will not
Outlive to-night.

SECOND SERVANT.

Pshaw ! heed not that.

What did betide——

THIRD SERVANT.

O such foul, rugged ways,
Such floods, such bogs, such woods had we to pass !
And then so many leagues of desert land,
Where not a blade of corn or village home
Our weary eye-sight blest,—a wilderness,
So made by Norman swords and Norman fires.
Then, when the Tweed we crossed, such hostelries !
Nothing but oaten cakes, with Saxon slaves
In every hovel ! ⁽³⁶⁾ O, I wept to see them !
I wept too for myself, for I was famished.
How did I joy, on my return, to view
The chantry-tapers gleaming through the windows
Of our brave abbey.

SECOND SERVANT.

Joy me with some news,—
Not of thy worthless self, but of the state.
Whom have you hither brought ?

THIRD SERVANT.

O, some great man.

SECOND SERVANT.

But who, good Herbert ? tell me, tell me who ?
What name, what noble title doth he bear ?

THIRD SERVANT.

Faith ! know I not. Our abbey knights were all
So silent, and so chary of his name,
That one might think he came here to be christened ;
Yet such observance paid.

SECOND SERVANT.

That smacks, I vow,

Strongly of mystery. O, could I but pry
Into these deep state secrets! I would give
My very head to——

THIRD SERVANT.

Thou mayst, for aught 'tis worth,
Nor greatly by the gift thy wisdom lessen.
Would I could pry into a venison pasty,
Or forthwith strict examination make
Of a well-roasted bustard or fat crane,
For I am lean and faint. But I will see
What cheer the buttery yields.

SECOND SERVANT.

Then art thou come
In right good time: there's glorious feasting here.
But thou, dull fellow, hast no great regard
For plots and state affairs.

THIRD SERVANT.

No; but I have
For the sad state of my deserted bowels,
From which good cheer hath absent been so long,
That they are troublesome and noisy grown
As a parched tribe of melancholy frogs,
Croaking for summer rain. [Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—*The great Hall of the Abbey. A magnificent Banquet. The tables, as they recede, are elevated one above the other. The Earls of Norfolk, Hereford, and Northumberland, with a crowd of Norman and Saxon conspirators, discovered. The Abbot is seated at the head of the upper table: behind him large folding doors, which are closed.*

ABBOT.

My Lord of Norfolk, there is fatal truth

In all which thou hast uttered of this King.
King, did I call him? Ay, the King of Terrors!
Your children's children, who in after years
The chronicles of these sad times shall read,
If penned by faithful scribes, their leaves of woe
Will wet with tears, and, shuddering, close the book,
In doubt if man against his fellow men
Such horrid deeds could act.

HEREFORD.

Deeply do I
And my good Lord of Norfolk now repent,
That we in aught were made the means by which
This Norman Duke, son of a harlot, stole
The crown of England from its regal heir.
Heaven witness for us, and these Norman chiefs,
How we have o'er the miseries and the wrongs
Which every gallant Saxon here hath borne,
Tears of compassion shed.

WALTHEOF—(*aside.*)

O yes, such tears
As the grim crocodile of Egypt weeps,
When in his jaws a human victim bleeds.

ABBOT.

Fill deep, courageous lords and barons bold;
Let your rich wine-cups mantle to the brim,
Red with the empurpled vintages of France:
To merry England drink—Prosperity,
And death to all her foes! And though a tear,
A manly tear, may mingle with the draught
For her hell-gendered wrongs, it will inspire
With nobler ardour every gallant heart
To aid her righteous cause. Prosperity
Again to England! death to all her foes!

[*Shouts, flourish, &c.*

Enter Hereward in splendid armour. Shouts and cries of Hereward! Hereward!

HEREWARD.

Fill me a goblet,—higher fill it yet !
My soul outflows with joy to meet you here,
All friends and brothers, though of different blood.
England to thee prosperity ! but death,
Death to thy proudest foes ! [Drinks.]

WALTHEOF—(*aside.*)

Why what are these
Who here have met together ? I begin
To doubt some hidden treason. No ; the wine,
The wine hath heated these proud Norman lords,
And now they utter what in cooler hours
They deep would blush to own. Or is it all
A plot, the unwary Saxons to destroy ?

ABBOT.

Welcome, brave Hereward, to our banquet-halls.
Star of our Saxon chivalry, that comest
In all thy brightness from the eastern climes,
To shed the glory of thy wide renown
O'er these dark isles o' th' West, thy native land,
Thrice and again we hail thee ! lifting high
Our ruddy wine-cup to thine honoured fame.
Ne'er yet hath he, the self-styled Conqueror, made
Thee bow in homage to his sceptre-sword ;
And therefore thy untarnished lustre shines
Amid our darkness, like a track of glory
Lingering among pale twilight's sullen clouds.

HEREWARD.

Good my Lord Abbot, give me leave to hope
A splendid dawn of glory draweth nigh,

When the faint star of my poor fame, that long
Hath wandered through a night of clouds and storms,
Shall fade away in the broad sunny blaze
Of universal freedom.

NORFOLK.

England, my lords,
With all her countless riches, ⁽³⁷⁾ hath been made
A prey to lawless power. I shame to own
My brand and Hereford's have been unsheathed
To aid the spoiler's work ; but from this night
I, by St. Dransius, swear they shall be drawn
For England's general weal,—England whom we
Adopt as our loved country ! But why stands,
Thoughtful and silent, brave Northumberland,
On whom the love of every Saxon waits,
Whom all true Normans honour ? And has he
No balm to pour upon his country's wounds,
No spirit for great enterprise, who once
With trump-like voice roused all the north to arms,
And made the lion of the south to tremble ? ⁽³⁸⁾

WALTHEOF.

My lords and barons, I have listened long
With wonder and with sorrow to your words ;
Yet I their import clearly gather not.
Am I in error, when I say they sound
Like the forewarning voice that tells the world
Of the deep thunder's coming ? Wrong I any
In deeming you as heralds that proclaim
Complotted treason ?

HEREWARD.

Treason ! whom against ?
And is it treason when I say my sword
Shall be unsheathed my country to defend ?

Is it rank treason to declare her crown
Hath from the anointed brows of her loved prince,
Her Darling, by vile hands been rudely plucked
To grace a bastard robber? Is it treason
To say the lawless sword hath long been drunk
With England's noblest blood? that her sad widows
And orphans 'mid the ashes of their homes
Lamenting sit, and to the angry heavens
Cry out for vengeance? O, if thus to speak
Treason be deemed, then boldly I proclaim
Such treasons to the world! Even on the necks,
The necks of Normans, hath the tyrant laid
His iron yoke; but these our brave compeers
Have dashed it off, and will obedience yield
To some more rightful prince, whose gentle sway
Shall heal our country's bleeding wounds, and bid
Saxons and Normans henceforth live in peace.

ABBOT.

Behold him, then! Sound, sound the warlike trump!
Hail to the King! and long live "England's Darling!"

[A grand flourish.—The folding doors behind the Abbot are suddenly flung open, and discover Edgar seated on a throne, with the crown of England on a cushion by his side, and surrounded by attendants and the ensigns of royalty.—The conspirators all shout, while Waltheof appears confounded with astonishment.—The Abbot leads Edgar forward, the crown borne before him.]

WALTHEOF.

I am o'erwhelmed! Wine, wonder, hope, and fear
Of darker evils, make my dizzy brain
Whirl round and round. Is it indeed loved Edgar?

My heart leaps to behold him. I must kneel
And bless him, though I die.

HEREWARD—(*stepping behind him unobserved.*)

Beware thy Norman wife !

[*Waltheof starts, and Hereward retires unseen
among the crowd.*]

WALTHEOF.

Those words again !

In that slave's voice, and here ! Who art thou ?—Gone ?

Mystery and fiends ! Yet will I homage pay

Whate'er betide hereafter,—life or death.

Welcome once more to England, dear-loved Prince !

Tears from these eyes gush forth to see thee, Edgar,

Last of thy blessed line, again our King,

And joy all utterance chokes.

EDGAR.

Those tears, my lord,

More precious I esteem, than all the gems

That glitter in yon crown. My gallant chiefs,

If 'tis your will, and Heaven's, that I should sit

On England's throne, mine by the right of birth,

I, by your wisdom guided, so will rule

These realms, that none shall have just cause to wish

Change and renewed disorder.

NORFOLK—(*aside.*)

Doubt I that,

Weak puppet King ! Soon must a gloomy change

Come o'er the brightness of thy royal dreams.

HEREWARD.

My gracious sovereign, on my knees I yield

The homage of my soul. This sword, the gift

Of great Alexius, Emperor of the East,

Which in barbarian blood hath oft been dyed

When I his brave Varangians led to victory,
Shall ne'er again be sheathed, till I have seen
Lord Edgar seated on his father's throne,
Or with the dead sleep in a laurelled grave.
Set England's royal crown upon his head ;
And, till our men are ready for the field,
In Ely's isle shall he safe refuge find.

NORFOLK.

I hence with Hereford will to the north :
There muster arms and warriors for the fray.

ABBOT—(*crowning Edgar.*)

Once more on thine anointed brows we place
King Edward's diadem. Thou art our lord.
All faith, obedience, fealty, and love
To William we abjure, and pay to thee.
Reign, Edgar, King of England ! Cheerily sound
The pealing trump, uplift the voice of joy,
And every Saxon shall from shore to shore,
Grasping his spear, repeat the loud acclaim !
[*Flourish, shouts, &c.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room of State in the Palace of Northumberland.*

Judith and Osmond discovered. Lan-Ivan at a distance with his harp.

LAN-IVAN.

SONG.

HARP of the South! that long hast hung
On Corph's lone willow banks, unstrung
By seer and prophet-bard that sung
The wild chief's martial story,
Who sleeps beside yon altar-stone,
Which on the desert stands alone,
Where the midnight wind and the sea-wave moan
For his departed glory.

Gentle harp! thy melody
Sounds like Hope's soft voice to me,
When the clouds of darkness roll
O'er my woe-benighted soul.

When I touch thy golden string,
Thou of other years dost sing,
And radiant visions round me throng
That listened to thine ancient song,

When our fathers on the heath
Drew the battle-sword of death ;
When, returned from blood-drenched fields,
In the hall they hung their shields,
And at banquet, victory crowned,
Song and mead-cup circled round.

Years of glory, days of old,
Deeds forgotten, tales untold,
Ye are past,—as soon shall be
Lan-Ivan's feeble minstrelsy.

Ah ! gentle harp of Locmar's sacred spring,
Soon must I cease to strike thy magic string !
How many silent years have flown away,
Since thou in Celtic hall hast woke the lay !
And when I with my Bardic fathers sleep,
Thou shalt be hurled amid the ocean deep,
That rolls its stormy tide on Purbeck's shore,
And none shall ever wake thy music more !

Who then for the Celtic warrior shall mourn,
As he slumbering lies in his dusty urn ?
His death-song the winds of the forest shall be,
And his requiem the midnight hymn of the sea.

Who then for the harp and its minstrel shall weep,
When with strangers he far from his fathers shall sleep ?
The Morning will come in her beautiful light,
And, veiled in her darkness, the widow-like Night :
To his tomb, with her roses and tears, will come Morn,
And Night shall be there, with her cloud and her storm,
To mourn o'er the last Druid-bard of the isle,
On whom his proud age deigned never to smile !

OSMOND.

And has my lovely Countess, by the songs
Of this wild harper, been amused and pleased ?

JUDITH.

Little, forsooth, the strains of northmen charm
Those who have heard the melodies and lays
Of tuneful Troubadour. ⁽³⁹⁾ Say, to what land,
Minstrel, owest thou thy birth ?

LAN-IVAN.

I, lady, from
The ancient line of British bards am sprung,
Who in the Earldom of Lord Dorset once,
Amid the woods of Purbeck's Druid isle,
Flourished beloved and honoured. I alone
Of all my race remain, the last to strike
The magic harp of yore ; and now mine age
Hath fallen on sad and evil times, for none
In all the Earldom heed the son of Song,
Or pay him grateful kindness.

OSMOND.

Then adopt
Some other calling. Riches, once obtained,
No matter how, will win respect and worship.
Fling on the fire thy barren harp, and quit
The minstrel craft ; then wealth and booty seek,
By the brave soldier's far more gainful trade.

LAN-IVAN.

Sorry advice to one of my years given,
And by an Earl, who should stand forth the first
To cherish and protect the child of Song.
Titles, and rank, and wealth the sword may win ;
But they are bloody spoils, which in their glory,
Like the red comet's prophet-warning beams,

Shed woe and famine, pestilence and death.
But the dominion of the harp, entwined
With rosy-breathing flowers of Paradise
By Genius gathered, willing empire wins
O'er every heart where gentle feelings dwell,
And, like the spirit of beneficence,
Is ever blest in blessing. Sad may be
The story of his woes, in these dark times,
Whose noble birthright is the gift of song ;
Yet shall hereafter glory mark his tomb,
And Pity sit a weeping mourner there,
Scattering immortal wreaths.

OSMOND.

Such empty fame,
Gained by a life of misery, is, I deem,
Most dearly bought ; and when obtained, not worth
So high a purchase. Will hereafter fame,
When hunger-bitten, feed thee, and outpour
Thy wine in cups of molten gold ? or raise
A palace for thy glory, filled with slaves
To wait their master's bidding ? Scant must be
Thy consolation, o'er a mess of herbs
To muse on death-doled honours.

LAN-IVAN.

Barbarous chief !

Is it scant consolation that my harp
Soothes the desponding, stirs the brave to deeds
Of worthy enterprise, and o'er the dull
Cold dream of life the full refulgence flings
Of heaven-born inspiration ? What, though scant
The bard's light stores, still is he rich in all
That lifts the soul of man above his fellows ;
And in his bosom burns a god-lit fire,

Which o'er his brows the radiant image sheds
Of ever-living glory.

OSMOND.

Wealthy bard !

Warm keep thyself with that, and let conceit
Feed well the flame : then in the winter's depth
Thou mayst defy the frost.

LAN-IVAN.

Sarcastic lord !

Hadst thou no garments brighter than thy wit
Wherein to deck thy pride, full sure wouldst thou
Be beggarly arrayed.

JUDITH.

We will not brook

Such language in our halls. Now did thy merits
Transcend thy boundless arrogance, small here
Would be thine honours.

LAN-IVAN.

None do I expect :

It is not in your ignorance to bestow them ! ⁽⁴⁰⁾
If true it be what sages have declared,
That he whom Genius crowns is made a noble
By God himself, then his nobility
Must theirs surpass whom only kings make great,
Far as the morn outshines the glow-worm's light.
And, lady, know, that in the Poet's gift
Are honours, prouder even than from the proudest
He can himself receive. In better days
So England's princes thought,—thus thought, and gave
The bard deservedly in hall and bower
Rank, and a lordly seat, and laurel wreath,
For well knew they his harp alone bestowed
Fame which can never die. ⁽⁴¹⁾

OSMOND.

Since those good kings
Are all departed, better 'twere, I trow,
That thou shouldst quickly follow, and become
Their boon companion: though, perchance, among
So many heavenly harpers, thou wilt find
Thy craft engrossed, and little need of thee.

LAN-IVAN.

Thine is the pride, the adventitious pride,
Of lofty birth, and mine of loftier genius.
Thou art a soldier: but, my lord, thy fame,
If fame thou hast, shall perish, like the cloud
That passeth in its evening pomp away,
If no illustrious bard arise to sing
Thy battle-deeds. Yes; thy proud name shall be
Forgotten, with thy horses, dogs, and slaves
That on thy bounty feed. But when thy halls
Of banquet-revelry all silent lie
In lone, weed-hidden ruins, when thy form,
That now so proudly glows with joyous life,
Shall be dissolved, and its component parts
Hurled to the elements that clip us round
As though it ne'er had been,
The poet's wreath shall be as fresh and green
As when in music o'er his harp-strings rolled
The living tide of song. And so farewell,
Lord Dorset!

[*Exit.*]

OSMOND.

For this I'll have, ere long, his eyes torn out! ⁽⁴²⁾
By all——

JUDITH.

Nay, gentle Osmond, take no heed
Of what this man hath uttered. Bards, thou know'st,

Are privileged of speech, and oft do they
Abuse their freedom.—But when goest thou hence
To join the army gathered by the King
To conquer Ely's isle?
Wild rumours are afloat of some new plot,
Some threatened insurrection. These rude wars
Must part us now. O, safe be thy return!
For thee alone I live.

OSMOND.

Still loath to part,
I linger gazing on thy matchless charms
Like summer twilight o'er the weeping flowers,
Till sullen night commands it to retire.

Enter Matilda.

MATILDA.

This pleasing interview I grieve to mar;
But from St. Alban's shrine Northumberland
Is speeding hither.

JUDITH.

Night and darkness come
Too hastily to hide thee from my sight.
I would not have Northumberland should learn
I saw thee in his absence.

OSMOND.

But this cloud
Long shall not intervene, from me to hide
The heaven-bright glances of those sunny eyes.
These stolen visitations heighten all
Our mutual joys, as moonbeams sweetly break
On the night-wearied pilgrim from the storm. [*Exit.*

JUDITH.

Have any tidings reached the palace yet

Of that proud slave, who by the faithless Harold
Escaped my vengeance ?

MATILDA.

None. It is believed
He was a Saxon of some note, disguised
For purposes of treason. Be who he may,
I owe him my best wishes ; and as he
To us is lost, so may destruction find him.

JUDITH.

I in his freedom am myself made free,—
Free of his blood. I would not have my love
Darkened with needless crime, for he can now
Work me no further mischief.

MATILDA.

As for that,
To slay a forest bull or stag is deemed
A weightier crime in law, than spilling blood
Of a base Saxon slave.

JUDITH.

But not in justice.—
Matilda, will the Earl approach me here ?

MATILDA.

I ween so, madam. He more sullen seems
Than is his wonted humour, and he walks
Conversing with the air, or some foul fiend
Who dogs him at the heels.

Enter Waltheof.

WALTHEOF—(*aside.*)

Would I St. Alban's halls had never seen !
That Abbot hath beguiled me to my ruin :
Poison was in his wine-cups. O, they are
Rank traitors all ! And shall I link myself

To such a hopeless cause, when I have sworn
Allegiance to the King? 'Tis a base plot!
It must be base, or that ungrateful herd
Of Normans had not joined it.

JUDITH.

Good my lord,
Why muse you thus with sorrow-troubled brow?
Reflect not on the past.

WALTHEOF.

He who from manhood's prime begins to wane,
Loves oft, with thoughts of mingled grief and joy,
To turn the leaves of memory, there to read
The tale of years departed, when o'er youth
Wild dreams of future fame and glory flung
Their morning splendours,—brightened to full day,
Or faded, like the eve-sky's thronging pomps,
In darkness and despair,—
To mark how many, once well known and loved,
Shall ne'er be known again, with all those scenes
Of sunshine and of storm through which we have passed
The actors on life's stage. Judith, dismiss
Thy handmaid from thy presence.

MATILDA—(*aside.*)

Folly bless thee,
And nurse thy seedling wit! To what tends all
This sober homily? Would such a fool
But take the cowl, it were a joyous riddance.

[*Exit.*

JUDITH.

Thy words, my lord, veer widely from thy thoughts;
These are of present things—things of high moment:
I've not beheld thee so o'erwhelmed before.
Give me to know the cause.

WALTHEOF—(*sinking on her bosom.*)

O Judith, Judith !

I am become a wretch, lost and undone !

JUDITH.

Lauded for this be every Saint in heaven !

I now may from a blood-stained crime be saved. [*Aside.*

What ails thee, Waltheof? Hast thou rashly fallen
Beneath the King's displeasure?

WALTHEOF.

I am fallen

Beneath my own contempt so low, that I
Can never lift my head again erect
With conscious, noble pride mid noble hearts,
Defying man to say that I have done
One base, dishonest act.

JUDITH.

Nay, with thyself

Be not so discontented. Tell me all :
Whate'er it be, here wilt thou pardon find,
For am I not thy bosom-friend, thy wife,
Bound still to honour thee ?

WALTHEOF.

I do believe

Thou art right faithful, and my love for thee
Was not the wild romantic love of boys,
Bright as the passing meteor and as brief ;
But that mild passion, whose still-constant flame,
Surviving age and death, is in our hearts,
Lit from that urn which sheds its holy light
Unfadingly o'er all the blest in heaven.
How shall I tell thee? Shame confounds my tongue.
No, rather let my guilt with me descend,
Unpublished, to the grave. But vain the wish !

Sedition's trump will sound my name abroad
To fill her rebel ranks, and I shall be
For a foul traitor branded.

JUDITH.

Shield us, Heaven!

A branded traitor ?

WALTHEOF.

I was lured to meet
At festive board, in Alban's abbey halls,
A crowd of Norman and of Saxon knights.
The wine-cup circled joyously, and stole—
Would I had dashed it from these fevered lips !—
My reason from me. Suddenly, to clang
Of trumpet and mad shout, the valves flew wide,
And showed us Edgar seated on a throne !
Confused, astonished, wine-inflamed, I felt
My smothered love for pious Edward's line
Flash like the quivering lightning through my veins ;
And, as the Abbot crowned the Etheling, I
Knelt with the chieftains and allegiance swore,
Abjuring faith to William. Thou know'st all :
And now my life is, Judith, in thy power.

JUDITH.

And safe it shall be ever, if my silence
Can so preserve it——till I reach the King. [Aside.

WALTHEOF.

With deep unfeigned sorrow I repent.
But what avails it now ? My country's wounds,
As yet unhealed, will soon bleed forth afresh,
And by new tyrants and new factions stabbed,
Sink deluged in her blood ! I'll to the King,
Confess my treason, and the plot reveal :
Perchance he may have mercy.

JUDITH.

Waltheof, no,
Not for a monarch's weregeld,—not for all
Thy life is worth to me ! I'll seek the King :
He loves me passing well. I will disclose
The fatal plot, how thou hast been beguiled,
Thy deep repentance, and thy merits plead,
Nor cease till I have brought thy pardon sealed.

WALTHEOF.

Didst thou not hear a voice ?

JUDITH.

What voice, my lord ?

WALTHEOF.

No matter,—'twas but fancy. Still those strange
Mysterious words are ringing in mine ears,—
“ Beware thy Norman wife ! ” Was that vile slave
Who from his dungeon 'scaped, some fiend disguised
In human shape, that ever thus he haunts me,—
Viewless as air, yet with a mortal voice ?
I hear him now. It is some evil omen !
Go, Judith, to the King : I will not be
Misdeemful of thy truth. Ha ! now I hear
Those horrid words again, more deep and loud :
That hollow voice is from the depths of hell.
Dark fiend, avaunt ! thine accents madden me. [*Exit.*]

JUDITH.

So high stood he in honour, this false step
In his self-condemnation darkens all
His former brightness, and such thoughts do mar
His brain-sick reason.

Enter Matilda.

Glorious news have I
To tell thee.—But we must not waste the time

In idle speech. Northumberland hath done
A daring act of treason, and as I
Shall shape in words before the angry King
The doing of that deed, it shall bring down
The gleaming axe upon his prostrate neck.

MATILDA.

Far better, lady, than to put our trust
In ruffian hirelings.

JUDITH.

Ay, and better still,
I shall be clear of blood. He hath himself
Brought on his head destruction. Who waits there?

Enter Attendant.

Go, bid my grooms they harness with despatch
My fleetest steeds, and make my chariot ready.

[Exit Attendant.]

Come thou, and for my journey to the camp
Prepare me speedily.

And as the captive eagle, to some rock
Long fettered, breaks her chain and towers aloft
To meet the noontide sun, so I, set free
From the dull chains which bind me to this Saxon,
Shall bask in Love's bright heaven without a cloud.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*The Royal Pavilion in the camp on the
borders of Ely.*

*The King, Lanfranc, Osmond, Fitz-Rollo, Barons,
and Guards.*

KING.

Yon wave-locked island is the last strong-hold

Of robbery and rebellion in the realm.
When, lords, will come the day that we shall see
Our standard floating from the fen-girt towers
Of this enchanter? O, impatience frets
My warlike spirit sorely!

FITZ-ROLLO.

When will come
The hour that I shall this Varangian meet,
Falchion to falchion, steed to steed, and mid
The battle-carnage trample on his wreaths?

OSMOND.

Doubt not, sir King, but we shall soon hear news
From Ely's shifting Abbot. All his lands
Beyond the precincts of this island seized
Wisely by thy command, he will betray
Ere long the fords.

Enter Ivo.

KING.

Ivo, the news! the news! How speeds the witch
With her enchantments? Come, for once be brief.

IVO.

My constant speech is brevity itself,
With all observance due to proper words.
I would not to the King a story tell
In talk unseemly, use uncourt-like style,
Not for a King's full ransom. My discourse
Is ever fitted to the hearer's skill;
And though my sayings brief and scant may be,
Yet I, dread sire, meet choice of language make.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Dull-prosing fool, whose words belie themselves——

KING.

Scant be they now, or I shall cut them short
With heavy curses.

IVO.

All the Saints forbid
That I should on my head such evil bring
By strange loquacity.

KING.

The witch! the witch!

FITZ-ROLLO.

And Hereward! What of the wild Varangian?

IVO.

Why I have not two tongues.

KING.

No; if thou hadst,
I'd have thee placed upon some steeple-top
Where bells were wanting, ⁽⁴³⁾ and thy gingling tones
Would make the Devil with impatience flee
Far from thy noisy station.

IVO.

Then, my lord,
Not to be wearisome, first of the bridge,
That bridge built for the troops to cross the fen—
It was a noble bridge! and secondly,
The tower upon it—O it was, my lords,
A gallant tower! built of enduring wood.
Both bridge and tower were by my skill contrived.
I planned with judgment, and the craftsmen wrought
Under my teaching, till the turret rose
O'erpeering all the moor,—the moor? You might
Have from its summit seen the utmost bounds
Of the wide German ocean, and the shores
That border it beyond!

KING.

What of the hag,
Thou lying boaster ? Say, where is the witch ?

IVO.

In the dark pit of hell with all her imps !
My royal lord, I placed her on that tower ;
And as the soldiers o'er the bridge advanced,
She plyed her dread enchantments, from the depths
Of deathless Night her demons calling up
To blast with plagues the rebels. I, methought,
Perceived the air now black with sooty wings,
And now with clouds of burning sulphur filled ;
While such strange sounds were heard, as made my hair
Bristle like serried spears ! When suddenly
That Hereward, the high-priest of the Devil,
To whose dread masterdom grim hags, and fiends,
And mighty spirits bow, with lightning fired
The reedy marsh, and from his nostrils blew
A hurricane that fanned the struggling flames,
Which onward, onward like a torrent, rushed,
Till blazing bridge and crackling, crashing tower,
And soldier-band and hag, with yell and scream
Were in one hell-like bonfire burnt to ashes !
There's a brave tale ! and worded well, I trow,
And every sentence truth.

KING.

Some unknown powers
Protect this isle ; yet be they ministers
Of heaven, or agents of the unfathomed pit,
We will not stir till conquest crown our arms,
Till some bold knight this Hereward shall drag
A captive to our tent.

FITZ-ROLLO.

I'll office that
Glad duty of true knighthood, and here vow,
By the proud peacock and my golden spurs,
This battle-harness ne'er to doff, till I
Have dragged the wizard to my sovereign's feet.

IVO.

Mercy on thy poor bones, then ! They will ache
With sharp, untold-of pains, bruises, and cramps,
Ere thou wilt master that terrific fiend.
A fen-eel would not through thy fingers slip
With half the ease he will escape thy blows.

Enter Officer.

OFFICER.

My liege, the Countess of Northumberland
Desires to be admitted.

KING.

What strange business
Hath brought her to our camp ? Good Earl of Dorset,
Conduct her hither.

OSMOND.

Sovereign, you confer
A pleasing duty on me. [*Exit Osmond.*]

FITZ-ROLLO.

O, no doubt ;
For thou art in a tender lady's eyes
The very flower of gentle chivalry,—
Made up of love, and secrecy, and fond
Devotedness, with melting sighs and glances,
And, like a well-trained hound, a maiden's glove⁽⁴⁴⁾
Or scarf canst fetch and carry ; on red lips
Press kiss soft as moonbeams give young flowers,

And as inconstant, too.—But see, he comes,
Leading the Countess daintily, as if
He sorrowed that her feet should touch the ground.
I marvel much he spreads not his bright robe
For her to walk on.

Enter Judith, led by Osmond.

KING.

How comes it, lady niece,
That you unwonted visitation pay
To camps and scenes of war?

JUDITH.

My royal uncle, I am hither come
Warning to give thee of a fearful plot——

KING.

What plot? what new commotion is stirred up?
And who are its abettors?

JUDITH.

Good my lord,
Edgar is from the Scottish court returned;
And in St. Alban's halls hath he the chiefs
Of this conspiracy in council met,
Where on his head the rebel Abbot placed
The imperial diadem.

KING.

I'll hang that Abbot
In chains before his abbey gates, and bury
Beneath the burning ruins all its inmates!

LANFRANC.

Alas! and never shall this realm find peace?
I fondly hoped that——

KING.

Lanfranc, there can be

No peace for England while one Saxon Thane
Hath leave to wear a head ! But I will make
Her provinces the dwelling-place of death,
Till none remain to hide the unburied dead,
Rather than yield my sword-enguarded throne,
Or thus be bearded by eternal treason.

JUDITH.

More yet remains,—woe worth the tongue that tells !
Norfolk hath wedded Lady Isabelle,
And now with Hereford proclaims rebellion,
An army gathering hitherward to march
And join Prince Edgar's banners.

KING.

Those Normans, too ! Heaven's crimson vengeance quail
them !
But how, good, gentle niece, didst thou obtain
The knowledge of this plot ?

JUDITH.

Ah me ! my lord,
I shame to speak it,—from that thankless man,
That Saxon Thane, to whom thou badest me give
My hand in marriage, on his worthlessness
Conferring titles, rank, and high command.
He the conspirators, at banquet hour,
Met in St. Alban's halls, and bowed the knee
In homage to this Edgar, on the winds
Casting his perjured loyalty and faith
Sworn to his rightful prince.

KING.

He shall for this
Bow to the headsman's block, though by his death
I every Saxon heart in England lose !

JUDITH.

Joy to my soul ! my coming shall speed well. [*Aside.*
Ah, good my lord ! though he to thee hath been
A vile ingrate, though he to me this plot
Boldly imparted, counting I, like him,
Should an apostate prove, and traitor turn
To my own royal blood ; yet think, O King,
He is my husband, and forgive when I
Entreat thee spare his life.

KING.

I would not hear,
In such a cause, an angel for him plead.
Thy husband ? still the worse, for it doth make
Tenfold more dark his guilt. The day in which
He falls into our power shall see him die !
For we are fixt as fate.

JUDITH.

I own, dread sire,
The justness of thine anger. And though he
My life did threaten with his naked sword,—
Perceiving my indignant heart repelled
All fellowship with rebels,—if in word
Or act I this conspiracy betrayed,
Yet how can I forget that late I gave
To this ill-fated man my bridal hand ?
How, if he die, can I myself forgive,
Being the instrument and means by which
He finds a bloody end ?

KING.

Wrong not thy truth——

JUDITH.

O, will it not be said I have transgressed
The duty of a wife, and to the block

Betrayed a loving husband? But to see
My sovereign standing on destruction's verge,
And he, this Saxon, a fell regicide,
Stealing behind with lifted knife to strike
My King, my dear-loved uncle,—mad with fear,
And reckless what mankind or after times
Might deem me for this act, I hither flew
To save my royal kinsman—save my nation
From universal slaughter; ⁽⁴⁵⁾ for the English
Have sworn to slay the Normans in one night
Throughout the kingdom!—Yet, by Heaven! I half
Repent my rash resolves, lest on this head
A husband's blood should fall.

KING.

Countess, let not
Thy tender weakness lead thee into fear.
Thou hast thy duty done to Heaven and me,
And Justice, when he falls, his blood shall wipe
From off her sword on his own guilty head.

JUDITH.

Mother of God! I see him hastening hither!
Who knows how, by repentance, he the King
May soften yet to mercy.

[*Aside.*

I confess,
With deep reluctant grief confess, shouldst thou
Be won to spare the Earl,—and Heaven incline
Thy heart to pity!—thou must never hope
That he can pardon *thee*, while on that head
Rests England's crown; for in his guilty dreams
Oft have I heard him vow to do such deeds,—
That he would with thy bastard blood wash out
The wrongs thou didst to England——Goodness keep me,
The man is here!

Enter Waltheof.

KING.

Welcome, right worthy Earl.

Thy coming is well timed, for thou dost wear
A soldier's weapon, and in giant strength
Mightst rival famed Sir Bevis. Nor would thy
Unflinching virtue and unshaken truth
Do offices of good to those who put
Our high authority to shame, as here
Too long these rebel slaves have done, or stain
With one disloyal act thy well-tried courage.

WALTHEOF.

My gracious sovereign, at thy feet I bow,
And offer here my sword. If in thy wrath
Thou to the hilt shouldst plunge it in my blood,
With my last breath I shall applaud the deed,
And own it is the doom I justly merit.

KING.

Northumberland, in thee our confidence
And faith have long been placed ; and thou hast shone
Amid our stormy councils like a star
To guide us to the shrine of infant Peace,
New born to bless thy country ; while in love
And service fast to bind thee to our heart,
With king-becoming gifts thy worth we crowned,
And our imperial blood allied to thine :
It therefore cannot be, that thou shouldst do
A deed beyond our pardon.

WALTHEOF.

Ah, my liege !

I now am fallen from honour's glorious height,
Where, like a goodly cedar, long I towered

In the full sunshine of thy princely love.
Dark, in an evil hour, the tempest came,
And laid me prostrate ! I confess my crime,
And bootless were it to entreat thy pardon,
For I have been a traitor ! and concealed
The daring plots of traitors !—
But though in saintly hall I bowed the knee
Before the Etheling's rebel-guarded throne,
Yet, when with noisy night the mantling fumes
Of wine had passed away and reason dawned,
I saw my guilt, dark as the tempest-cloud
That fronts the rising sun, and, conscience-smote,
Came here, my sovereign, to confess—and die.

LANFRANC.

O, let his former worthiness atone
For this one error, deeply so repented :
For he hath been like a poor wanderer lost,
At eventide, amid the misty shades
Of pathless mountain wilds——

KING.

Northumberland,
Farewell ! [*Exeunt King, Lords, and train.*]

WALTHEOF—(*after a pause.*)

For ever ! ay, for ever !

Such long adieu thy stern “farewell” implied.

JUDITH.

Grant, Heaven, it did ! But Lanfranc, meddling fool,
May yet incline the King.—(*aside.*)—My lord, I grieve
That I have failed in thy behalf to move
His Highness to forgive, albeit I strove
Long and unweariedly, with prayers and tears,
To pluck sweet mercy from him. Yet, hadst thou
My counsel followed, I should have prevailed.

But thou art headstrong, and thy coming here
Marred all my better hopes.

WALTHEOF.

How could I live
One hour in peace with such a burthened heart ?
Confession hath struck off those chains by which
Guilt bound me down to suffering.
Now, if this day should be my last on earth,
Peace will be mine, and pardon at His throne
Where kings must kneel for mercy.

Enter Officer and Guards.

OFFICER.

My lord, I bring
Unwelcome summons. 'Tis his Highness' will
That I conduct you to the block, which stands
Prepared amid the camp.

JUDITH—(*aside.*)

Transporting news !
I know not how to hide this mighty joy.

WALTHEOF.

So sudden ? Let the will of Heaven be done !
Better to die, and in the grave find peace,
Than live as I do, weeping bitter tears,
My country, o'er thy miseries. Once I stood
Like a tall tree amid the crowded forest,
But long I've stood alone ; for one by one
My flourishing companions all have sunk
Beneath the ruthless axe, and now is come
My turn to fall. Farewell, bright-rolling sun !
Thou shalt behold to-morrow at thy rising,
Prostrate and withered on a naked desert,
The last tree of that forest ! Grant my death

May the fierce anger of the King appease,
And be my blood the balm to heal thy wounds,
My woe-devoted country !

JUDITH.

Alas ! my lord——

WALTHEOF.

Were there no stronger ties, mere life might be
Cast off without a sigh, like a poor garment
Which time hath worn so frail, it will not keep
The flaws of winter out ;
For O, how few and brief the sunny gleams,
'Twixt infancy and miserable age,
Which, through life's ever-rising tempests, shed
Joy on the soul ! Farewell, my dearest wife !
To part with thee is now the deepest pang
This heart on earth can feel.

JUDITH.

Adieu, my lord !

Thy duty 'tis with fortitude to meet
The stroke of death, and mine to humbly bow
With silent resignation.

WALTHEOF.

Ay, thou art

Resigned indeed ! That calmness on thy brow
Falls like the chilling snow of winter clouds
On life's last sunset hour. Mournful it is
To say farewell for ever, even to scenes
And things that we have looked on carelessly,
In days when thoughts of parting came not o'er us ;
But O, how bitter for those hearts whom Love
Hath bound in rosy bands to bid adieu,
When, by a sudden and a bloody death,
They are asunder torn ! And yet, whilst fast

These tears gush forth to think that we no more
Beneath the heavens shall meet, I do behold
A joy-gleam in thine eyes.

JUDITH.

It was my purpose
That thou shouldst die in ignorance of my hate ;
But thou wilt force the secret from my heart.
Away, then, all disguise. Know that I scorn,
Loathe, and abhor thee, darkly-bearded Saxon !
And let the knowledge make thy last few moments
The bitterest of thy life ! for I was led
A wretched victim to thy bridal couch,
An offering to propitiate thee, thou idol
Of hated Saxon worship. From thy tomb
I rise again to life. Weep for thee ? No,
My curses shall pursue thee to the block ;
And when my chariot rolls beneath the gates
Of Winchester, I shall look up and smile
To see thy head on their tall battlements
Hang blackening in the sun !

[*Waltheof strives to speak, but overwhelmed with
astonishment and horror, he sinks into the arms
of the Guards ; then by a violent exertion he
recovers himself.*

WALTHEOF.

Off, weakness ! or I shall be deemed by foes
A coward, and upon my country fling
In my last hour disgrace.—Speed ! speed thee, Death !
And from this world, with its incarnate fiends,
Give my impatient spirit quick release.

[*Exit Waltheof, guarded.*

JUDITH.

My heart, unburthened of its heavy load,

So long in silence borne, feels light and joyous.

Waltheof, thou

Wast never formed to captivate and please

The high unbounded passion of my soul,

That burns with all the wild romance of love,

Caught from th' enchanting lays of Troubadours.

Hark ! the deep wailing of the death-trump floats

On the low-murmuring winds. The gathered host

March to behold a brother-soldier die

A soldier's death.

Now mid those ranks doth flash

The headman's axe ! That dull and heavy blow—

Again it flashes and again it falls—

What ! lifted still, thou blood-drenched instrument ?

By Heaven, the fool

Knows not his office, and doth basely mangle—

That shout along the lines proclaims it done !

It hails thy spirit, Waltheof, freed from sufferance,

And mine from marriage thrall.

Thus undermined

By captive fires, some lofty mountain falls, ⁽⁴⁶⁾

Which in its sunless valleys, deep and dark,

The murmuring groves and streams with shadows hid ;

But when no more concealed, those woods resound

With merry lay of birds, and on the winds

Their leaves, all golden with the morn, they fling,

While bright those waters flash as diamond showers,

Singing along their banks, that blush with new-born
flowers.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An open Country in the Isle of Ely.*

Enter the King, Osmond, Fitz-Rollo, Barons, and army, with banners and martial music.

OSMOND.

I doubted not the Abbot would betray
Island and friends, his dearer lands to save ;
And by his means we have the entrance won
Into the fastness of these rebel hordes.

KING.

Behold ! they onward come in battle-wise,
Resolved to hazard all,—by Edgar led,
Their meek, deluded Darling. Ere we draw
The sword of vengeance, lords, I will submit
To parley with these rebels ; doubting not
To win, without a blow, the voice of those
Who follow this unwarlike, gentle Prince.

FITZ-ROLLO—(*aside.*)

I hate a brawl of words : such female feuds
Let cowards fight. The clang of sword and axe
On ringing bucklers, and the deep-toned shout
Of a death-struggle are the sounds for me.

Enter Edgar, Chiefs, and Saxons.

KING.

How now, my lord ! And is it thus thou com'st
To meet thy sovereign, once thy friend, who held
Thee dearest in his heart of all his subjects ?

EDGAR.

We come, stern Duke of Normandy, to claim
Our regal birthright, which full well know'st thou
Descends to us from an illustrious line
Of England's warlike kings. Too long have we
Of our imperial honours been deprived
By thy o'ermastering power. There is our gage
To prove thy proud gainstanding we defy,
And God defend our right !

KING.

Warriors of England !

Sons of the shield and spear ! backed with a host
That doubles your amount, encompassed round
With gallant Barons—each himself a host,
Ye cannot count that I do fear to make
The sword the arbiter of Edgar's claims.
We therefore, ere that bright decider flash
In lightning from its scabbard, proffer peace
To all who will yon rebel standard quit.

[Shouts of defiance from the Saxon Soldiers.]

A moment's pause.—Ours are no idle words.
Soldiers, behold your leader ! Gentle boy,
Whose form, and bearing, and mild manners well
Become the love-bower of some amorous maid,
But ill befit the battle's bloody strife,
Whose brows with more beseeching grace would wear
The cowl of monk than England's helmet crown.
Is he, unworshipped boy, a chief to lead
Brave Saxons to the field, who ever from
The red right hand of War receive the wreath
Of victory, or an honourable death ?
Is he a King to sit on England's throne,
And guard her from the legions of the North,

On Denmark's coast now gathered? where proud fleets
The ocean darken with their shadowy sails,
Waiting the breeze that wafts them to these shores?
But I am he with sinews strung for war,
With arm that never failed to quell a foe,
Who will, if 'neath my banners ye enlist,
Lead you to victory o'er the savage Dane,
And make the haughty lords of France to bow
In vassalage to England. Here I swear
By the bright Resurrection! if ye yield
Obedience to my power, throughout the land
Shall pious Edward's laws be well observed,
And ne'er again shall Insurrection lift
Her voice to taint the honour of our reign
With falsehood or injustice.

[*Some of the Saxon Soldiers shout,—“A
William! A William!”*

Choose ye, then,
A weak, unwarlike, and unfriended boy
To be your chief, and with him that sure doom
Which on rebellion waits; or me, your King,
To be your martial leader, who will fight
To life's last gasp, the foremost in your ranks,
For your loved homes and all your dearest rights,
Though the wide North from every region pour
Her battles on these shores, and guide you on
To liberty and ever-living fame.

[*The Saxon Soldiers shout,—“Away with Edgar!
Death to the Etheling!” &c. They cross over
and join the royal troops, till only a few Chiefs
remain with Edgar, who stands awhile astonish-
ed and irresolute, then falls on his knees to the
King.*

EDGAR.

My gracious sovereign, I confess my crime,
And to thine abler hands resign for aye
The diadem of England. In return,
Grant me thy pardon: then a long farewell
To these loved shores I'll bid, and on the plains
Of Palestine fight bravely till I die ⁽⁴⁷⁾
For the blest Sepulchre, against the fierce
Blood-drinking Saracen.

KING—(*raising him.*)

Once more we take
Thee to our heart, and be oblivion flung
O'er all thine errors past.

FITZ-ROLLO—(*aside to the King.*)

Better it were
That he should die a traitor's death, than hazard
What may betide hereafter.

KING—(*to Fitz-Rollo.*)

Fitz-Rollo, no;
We scorn to take the life of one so meek,—
A dying faction's tool; while to the world
Such clemency shall o'er our sternness past
Shine like the rainbow wings of Peace, when from
The parting storm she strews the earth with flowers.
Rebellion now shall perish, like a stream
Whose fountain is dried up, nor ever more
Its turbulent and crimson billows roll
Through this war-harassed land.

Enter Hereward and Saxon Soldiers.

HEREWARD.

Ho, ye base, hireling slaves! ye coward fools!
That yield your throats to yon fell slayer's knife,

Turn, ere it be too late,—turn yet and stand
With me your leader, for your country stand,
And make one last great effort in the cause
Of liberty and England! Know ye not
That on you now your country's eyes are fixt,
This day her masterdom o'er Norman power
Expecting from your courage? that Renown
On yonder mountain waits with her loud trump
Your honour to proclaim where'er the name
Of Saxon has been heard, and on the car
Of ever-rolling Time your patriot deeds
In sunbeams to inscribe? But ye are fallen,
How basely fallen! from your allegiance sworn
To him your true-born and anointed King.
All evil things incurable alight
On every recreant, and the eternal curse
Of infamy rest on his unwept grave!

KING.

Thou art the leader of those pirate hordes,
Chief of a dark and hidden conspiracy,
Extended through the land. Yield, and for thee
Mercy may be in store.

HEREWARD.

Mercy? where was thy mercy, tyrant, when
Thy Norman robbers drove my widowed mother
From her domains and home, usurping all
Her fair inheritance? Where was thy mercy
When, overwhelmed by numbers I embarked
To seek in distant lands a soldier's fame,
Thy plundering Barons fired the noble towers
Of my ancestral dwelling? Still I see,
Crimsoning the lurid heavens, those flames ascend
As on my vessel's deck I stood, and vowed

Eternal war with Normans ; and that vow
Have I in eastern climes performed beneath
Durazzo's lofty bulwarks, till I drove
The Apulian Normans, by fierce Guiscard led,
Back to the Italian shores. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Thy Barons, too,
Can testify how well I have fulfilled
That vow on English ground ; nor will I break it,
Duke William, while this better arm can wield
A battle-axe for freedom.

KING.

Saucy groom !

Thou scorn'st my proffered mercy.

HEREWARD.

Talk'st thou still

Of mercy, when thine iron heart ne'er felt
Its blessed influence ? Where, then question I,
Was that sweet mercy, when thou to a land
Of fire and blood, of death and desolation,
Didst turn the wailing north ? not sparing one,
Even one poor hind to till the barren soil ?
England hath groaned, thou ruthless fiend, to see
Thy tender mercy to her wretched sons, ⁽⁴⁹⁾
Limb-lopped and eyeless, on the dark world cast,
To tell thy loving-kindness. She hath groaned
The robberies, flames, and murders to behold,
Which thou through her once-happy realms hast spread,
Out-measuring deepest horror ! Where thy mercy
To him, the bravest, noblest of his race,
Honoured Northumberland ? The axe hath fallen,
Dark homicide, on that last Saxon chief
Of his high rank, a martyr in the cause
Of glorious freedom ! Long shall he be wept
By all true-hearted Saxons, and his fame

Live with eternal years. Ha, Edgar ! Edgar !
Hast *thou* cast off thy fame, thy friends, thy country ?
Nay, then the lamb hath sought the prowling wolf,
The dove flown to the falcon for protection ;
And thou wilt be the next to learn how kind
The gentle mercies are of yonder Duke.

KING.

Peace, foul-tongued slanderer ! peace, audacious slave !
Our rigour was the offspring of your treason.—
But 'tis not king-beseeming parley thus
To hold with rebels. Down, ye traitorous herd !
Down with your weapons, and conditionless
Submit to us your sovereign.

HEREWARD.

Never yet
Have I to thee, Duke William, sworn allegiance,
Or owned thee, thou blood-sceptred chief, my King ;
Nor will I homage pay thee, but with those,
Whose noble hearts love their poor country still,
Fight, bravely fight it out ! Ho ! ye that yet
Will draw a sword for England, follow me !

[*Exeunt Hereward and Soldiers.*

[*The Saxons who had joined the King rush off, shouting,—“ A Hereward ! England and Hereward ! ”*

FITZ-ROLLO.

Now comes the fight, for which so long I've sighed
Like a fond lover for the bridal hour.
'Tis not becoming thee, sir King, to draw
Thy sword against these vile brigands and slaves ;
Let me, I pray, meet the Varangian dog,
And I his heart will bring thee to thy tent.

KING.

Go, brave Fitz-Rollo, but I charge thee bring
The slave alive. Do him no harm, for we
Important secrets from his lips must draw,
Ere justice can perform her bloody work.

FITZ-ROLLO.

Onward, my merry Normans, to the strife !

[Shouts, flourish, exeunt Fitz-Rollo and Soldiers.]

KING.

Dorset, and Edgar, come ye to our tent.—
I have bethought me, Etheling, and commend
Thy gallant purpose on thy shield to bear
The Red-cross of the holy Sepulchre.
A mighty spirit, like the tempest winds
That left the ocean, now is stirring up
All Christendom's bright chivalry, to pour
A glittering deluge of combined arms
On Palestine, and drive the infidel
From Salem's blessed city. Thou shalt be
Right well appointed with a noble train
Of stalwart knights, meet for thy princely rank.

Enter Lanfranc.

LANFRANC.

I bring thee welcome news my royal lord.
The Norman Earls in battle are subdued,
Lord Hereford is a prisoner, Norwich castle
By the high-constable of England taken,
And Norfolk fled beyond the narrow seas.

KING.

Fair tidings, by the rood ! We'll follow him
When peace is here established, and the storm
Gathered on Denmark's shore hath passed away,

As pass it will, nor ever reach this isle,
Since from the gold I've sown on Scandia's soil
Hath sprung up deadly strife: Soon gallant wars
Shall draw the discontented hence to France,
Bretagne to conquer: then the Armoric crown
With England's diadem shall be enwreathed,
And Philip tremble on his Gallic throne. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—*A Pavilion in the royal Camp.*

Enter Judith.

JUDITH.

The sound of yonder battle on the breeze
Comes like the far-off fall of many waters,
Now quick and hoarsely loud, now soft and low
As if in silence dying; till anon
Rises the piercing yell, the deep-toned shout
Of wild despair and victory. Where stays Dorset?
Is he amid that host struggling with Death?
Joy to my soul, he comes!

Enter Osmond.

OSMOND—(*aside.*)

The Countess? I

Would fain avoid her presence. She is free,
And freedom, to my gay romantic fancy,
Of all her charms hath robbed her. Questionless
She dreams of bridal vows and wedlock's chains:
O, they would drive me mad!

JUDITH.

Gentle my lord,

Thou comest——

OSMOND.

Ay, lady, to condole with thee

The bitter loss thou in Northumberland,
That kind and worthy husband, hast sustained.
Would he were living—for thy sake I wish it—
To dry those tears which unavailingly
Thou o'er his grave wilt weep!

JUDITH.

I o'er his grave
Can never weep. Too well thou know'st my love
Is lavished all on thee; and could these eyes
Shed tears, they would be tears of joy that I
On thee can gaze with transport, free from guilt.

OSMOND.

Guilt! lady? Why what guilt can we have known?
My friendship for thy beauty still hath been
Like the pure love of youthful Troubadour,
Across the sunlight of whose angel-dreams
Comes no unholy shadow. ⁽⁵⁰⁾

JUDITH.

Death and hell!
Is this not mockery? Ay, thou scoffing lord,
I see it in the glances of thine eye,
And on that misproud lip. But have a care
How thou dost wake the whirlwind of my rage.
I cannot brook, as softer ladies can,
The insults of thy sex,—no, nor endure,
Where I have loved to such a mad excess,
To find my fondness cast, all cast away,
Like seed upon a barren wind-swept rock,
And reap no kind return. And canst thou think
To break thine oaths, thy vows of constancy,
That drew me on to hope for happier days
Of freedom from my bondage? And when now
Those days are come, wilt thou not ask the King,

Who can deny thee nothing, his consent
To claim my bridal hand ?

OSMOND.

I sorely grieve
It may not be ; for 'tis decreed that I
The Lady Eva, his fair ward, shall wed,
The richest Saxon heiress in my Earldom.

JUDITH.

False, lying villain !
False, if the tale were true, as Hell can make thee !
Thou hast destroyed me ! stabbed my peace, my honour,
And sunk me in perdition ! All my dreams
Of promised bliss are fled. I, who so late
Floated on Hope's bright sea, am shipwrecked, lost ;
And thou, dissembling, smiling, cheating fiend,
This storm hast raised to dash me on the rocks,
Where I am left to perish !

OSMOND.

By fair knighthood !
I may with better justice cast on thee
The odium of deception. I had made
A glorious choice in such a soft, mild wife,
Whose tongue the noisy ocean would out-voice.

JUDITH.

Would, for thy perjury, I might see thee dashed
Headlong from some vast precipice amid
The depths of ocean ! hear thy last faint cries,
As round and round thy form whirled down the air,
Like th' eagle by the hunter's death-shaft pierced !

OSMOND.

Deeply beholden am I for thy good wishes ;
And let me tell thee, lady, in return,
The man that mates himself, ere he hath proved

The temper of a woman, is like one
Who puts to sea and every hazard runs
Of storm and shipwreck in an untried barque.
At best she's but a frail and leaky vessel,
Though rigged in flaunting sails and banners proud,
Fit only for a summer voyage of pleasure :
At least, such I esteem her.

JUDITH.

Thou disgrace
To chivalry and knighthood ! thou vain fool !
Henceforth I'll higher hold in my esteem
Than such a wretch the vilest reptile crawling.

OSMOND.

A marvellous change
In thine affections ! But thou mayst behold
How patiently I can endure their loss.

JUDITH.

Insulting slave ! O, that revenge were mine,
Great as my wrongs and boundless as my rage !

OSMOND.

Why all this wrath to lose a thing thou deem'st
Viler than vilest reptile ? It belies
Thy gentle tongue, and fondly flatters me.

JUDITH.

O, that my tongue could fill the air thou breathest
With brain-distracting poison, yet not kill thee !
My thoughts are steeped in the despair of hell !
I shall go mad if thou, Revenge, come not
To ease my burning heart !

OSMOND.

Think not thy love
For me hath on a barren rock been sown.
A goodly harvest, lady, hast thou reaped

Of disappointed hopes, of malice, rage,
And deep remorse, which, drop by drop, its dews
Of poison sheds cold on the withered heart,—
Remorse for thy dark treachery to thy lord,
Whose faithful love deserved a nobler fate.
He is a fool, in my best judgment, madam,
Who knows a woman plays her husband false,
Yet takes her for a wife.

JUDITH.

Devil incarnate !

Blackest of all the throng that darken hell !
True to thy fiend-craft, thou didst tempt me first,
Betray, and then accuse. Hence from my sight !
Go wed ; and be thy bridal hour accursed !
May thy frail wife betray thee to a slave,
Her children be deformed and hideous fools,
And thou, base wittol, think them all thine own,
Till grinning Infamy unveil thine eyes,
And hoot thee into madness ! On thy days
Sorrow of sorrows fall ! and when thou seek'st
The balmy hour of rest, the night-hag brood
In horrors on thy bosom ; all thy hopes
Perish for aye, and in thy dismal age
Palsy and plague, despair, and want, and hunger,
Fasten like furies on thee ; friendless die,
Like a base dog unwept ! and may thy soul
Meet the reward of perjury, where the damned
Dwell in unquenched fire !

[*Exit.*

OSMOND.

The saints assoil me from thy maledictions.
So much for love ! How passions shift and change
Like clouds that wait upon the evening sun !
Now brightening earth and heaven, and now a mass

Of lurid shadows ; and how like those clouds
Our passions deeply colour all o'er which
Their influence comes ! How could I ever deem
This Countess beautiful ? who uglier seems
Than the grim hag that rides the murky air,
Scenting the blood of infants ! I'll to the King.
Who knows what in her fury she may act ?
A woman, filled with malice, is the devil ! [Exit.

SCENE III.—*The Royal Pavilion in the centre of
the Camp.*

Enter the King, Lanfranc, Officers, and Guards.

KING—(*speaking to an Officer as he enters.*)

Didst thou not say Fitz-Rollo had secured
That Hereward de Brunne ?

OFFICER.

I did, my liege. [Shouts.

Those shouts proclaim the victory o'er the rebels,
Who fly on every side. And see, Fitz-Rollo
In chains their doughty captain hither leads.

KING.

Then art thou, England, wholly mine at last !

[Flourish of trumpets.

*Enter Fitz-Rollo, Ivo, and Norman Soldiers, with Here-
ward, Zalmira, and Saxon Chiefs as prisoners.*

FITZ-ROLLO.

My gracious sovereign, I've my vow performed,
And may put off this battle-gear to sleep
At ease in down.

IVO.

Yes, we at length have caught

The great fen-eel, the serpent of the marsh,
The priest of Beelzebub, the wizard king
Of mystic brothers ; who, when honest men
Are peacefully asleep, their meetings hold
To sup with demons on the flesh of babes.
Now certain 'tis, but wherefore know I not,
Satan has failed him at his utmost need.

KING.

Silence be on thy tongue.

IVO.

Needless behest

To one of such few words.

KING.

Thou, Hereward,
My stubborn foeman, art at length subdued.

HEREWARD.

By numbers, not by dint of manly valour.

KING.

That's nought of moment——

FITZ-ROLLO.

Then set out the lists,
And let me singly meet him. If this sword
Make him to quail not——

KING.

Peace, Fitz-Rollo, peace.
It doth suffice that thou hast brought him here,
For which a noble Earldom shalt be thine.
The tempest of rebellion, which so long

[*Addressing Hereward.*

Hath hung o'er England in its darkest wrath,
By thee, the master-spirit of the storm,
Hath been directed ; for, when absent, still
'Thine agents have been stirring. But the hour

In which thy life must expiation make
For such foul treason, be assured, is nigh.

HEREWARD.

Erst have I said I owe thee no allegiance.
Another King, though he wears not the crown,
My sovereign is ; my sovereign shall he reign
Long as I breathe, or he on earth exists :
And therefore stand I clear of any charge
Of treason, Duke, to thee.

KING.

This subterfuge
Will nought avail,—nay, magnifies thy guilt.

Enter Officer, hastily.

OFFICER.

My liege, I grieve to say your royal niece,
The Countess of Northumberland, is dead.

KING.

Dead ! and how died she ? What ! so sudden ?

OFFICER.

By her own wilful hand, my lord, she fell,
And with her parting breath declared the cause
Was Dorset's falsehood.

KING.

This is heavy news.

I loved her as my child.—

Dorset ! and falsehood ? Let the Earl be seized,
If he have done her wrong, his head shall grace
His shoulders not an hour.

[*Exit Officer.*

Now, Hereward——

ZALMIRA.

Thus low on bended knee, great King, do I
Implore for mercy to this English knight.

Have pity on us both, whose bridal vows
At early morn were registered in heaven.
O, make me not a wretched, hopeless widow,
Amid a land of strangers and of foes !
I am the daughter of a princely house,
From home and friends a hapless exile driven ;
Where can I look for pity but to him
Who reigns as God's vicegerent, and should be
The fountain of all mercy as of honour ?
O, deign to hear a weeping suppliant's prayer :
Forgive, and spare my husband !

KING.

Yes, on one,
And only one condition will I spare
The daring rebel. Hereward, 'tis said
'Thou art the chief of a mysterious Order,
Whose midnight deeds of guilt appal mankind ;
Whose influence, like strong poison in the veins,
Spreads through our kingdom. Now to us reveal
The names of those who are its potent chiefs,
Unveil its mysteries and its rites disclose,
And we here swear to pardon thy misdeeds,
Restore the lordships of thine ancient house,
And rank thee with our Earls.

HEREWARD.

Reveal, betray
My trust ? No ; honour and my God forbid !
Though here the assembled world were round me
gathered,
And its terrific yells of scorn and rage
Rang deafening in my ears, still would I stand
Unmoved and faithful to that glorious trust
Of honour by my brotherhood placed here,

As if the gentle winds of evening sung
The drowsy flowers to sleep. Wouldst thou to me
Yield all thy ducal rights of Normandy,
I would accept far sooner death, than take
On such base terms thy gifts.

KING.

Why, haughty knave——

HEREWARD.

Why, haughty Duke, think'st thou
The secrets of our Order, which I swore
Before the sacred oracles of God
Never to utter, I'll reveal to thee ?
No ; from this bosom let my heart be torn,
Ere to th' untaught its mysteries I betray !
But they are not, as thou and fools believe,
Secrets of blood and guilt. No : those bright deeds
We are enjoined to act, are deeds of love
And mercy to mankind. Our arts are not
Forbidden things of darkness, but those arts
And sciences which have on man bestowed,
Throughout all time, his best of earthly blessings ;
And Fame, as in her downward course she sweeps
On sun-surpassing pinion, flings abroad
Her scroll, emblazoned with th' eternal names
Of those we claim as brothers, whose renown
Transcends the warrior's glory.

KING.

Idle boast.

HEREWARD.

The warrior's pride, thou unbelieving Duke,
The spirit is of tyranny and blood ;
While our high Order stands the only bar
To lawless violence and ruthless power,

And through the darkest times in silence sheds
On iron hearts its influence, like the dew
That nightly cheers with noiseless benison
The sun-smote fields of summer.—

'Tis our pride
To feed the hungry and the naked clothe,
To shield th' oppressed from the oppressor's scourge,
And imitate our heavenly Founder's deeds.
The proudest chivalry and knighthood bow
To our far nobler, far more ancient Order,
In whose refulgence all their lesser pomp
Doth like the dawn-star fade, when from the kiss
Of the bold sun the speedy morning flies,
Earth brightening with her blushes. Ours is not
A titled rank ordained by mortal kings,
For it was founded by the KING of kings,
Who the wide ocean measured in his hand,
Lit with his fiery glance the flaming sun,
And on the formless void earth's deep foundations
Laid in eternal darkness—even HE
The ARCHITECT of all things !

KING.

Death or the secrets !

HEREWARD.

Death then be it ! Death
With glory, and not life with damning shame.

KING.

Death on the rack ! That from thee shall extort——

HEREWARD.

No, not a sentence. No, not one brief word
Which shall disgrace the name of a true brother.

KING.

Then let my guards advance——

ZALMIRA.

Hold ! mighty King.

O, be not like the lion in thy wrath,
Or eagle darting on her hapless prey !
Mercy, O mercy show, nor take his life !
Let us from hence depart ; grant me but this,
'Tis all I ask, and never more will we
Approach thy fatal shores.

KING.

Woman, thou hast
Permission hence to go.

ZALMIRA.

Go hence, sir King,
And leave my husband here to suffer death,
Death with protracted tortures ? No : I swear
If nothing can thy ruthless heart incline
To pity and forgiveness, I will stay
To soothe his agonies, to share his pangs,
And die upon the rack that mangles him !
Yet, for the love of Heaven at thy last hour,
Show some compassion to a wretch, whose woes
Have well-nigh driven her mad !—Alas ! I see
No gleam of mercy in that leopard glance,
No kind forgiveness on that brow of wrath.
Where shall I turn for hope ? To thee, to thee,
My love, my life, my husband !

HEREWARD.

O forbear,
Or thou wilt rive my heart-strings——

ZALMIRA.

And art thou
Regardless too of all my prayers and tears ?
Stern and unbending as this cruel King ?

And wilt thou, canst thou, who hast been so kind,
Leave me all wild to wander in despair,
A friendless maniac in this land of blood,
Exposed to scoffs and insult, shame and want ?

HEREWARD.

Support me, Heaven !

ZALMIRA.

Is there no hope on earth ?
No mercy to be found ? Madness I feel
Already like a whirlwind on me rushing !
Dark in a cloud of thunder am I wrapt,
And the red lightnings burn upon my brow !
Still art thou near me, and to thee alone,
In all the frantic horror of despair,
I, dying, cling for hope ! Then save, yet save
Thy wretched, lost Zalmira ! For my sake
Show mercy to thyself ! Yield up, reveal
The secrets of thine Order. Ah ! look not
Thus sternly on thy poor, distracted wife.
More kind would be to me thy dagger's point.
Here strike it home ! home to my heart, that I
May in thine arms expire, and be at peace !

HEREWARD.

O, my Zalmira, neither gory rack
Nor glowing coals heaped round my blackening form
Could make me feel what now I feel for thee !
But ah ! to break my vows,—those sacred vows !
O, couldst thou love me stripped of fame and honour,
Cast out a thing of scorn for all good men
To heap derision on ?

ZALMIRA.

O, love thee ? Yes,
More than I ever loved. Let all the world

Forsake, despise, and on thy head fling curses,
I'll to thee ever kneel with love and worship,
And from mankind hid in some forest cave,
We in each other's arms shall still be blest !

HEREWARD.

But I should hate, despise, and curse myself,
And in despair of Heaven's forgiveness, live
Like the condemned in hell ! Think who thou art ;
Think of thy Grecian blood, thy princely birth,
And the proud deeds of thy renowned forefathers.
Thou canst not dwell with guilt ? Then be of comfort,
And joy to see me die a martyr's death.

KING.

Soldiers ! obey your King, and drag him hence.

LANFRANC.

I can no longer hold. My sovereign lord,
In this poor, broken-hearted lady's prayers
I, kneeling, join. As Christ, when on the cross
Forgave his murderers, so do thou forgive
This noble captive.

KING.

I will have his heart
Torn from the traitor's bosom, or the secrets
Which in that heart are lodged.

ZALMIRA.

Tyrant ! no more
My tears shall seek thy ruthless soul to move,
Unyielding as the rock.—

O thou, who art
My only joy on earth, my hope in heaven,
Thy words have fired my Grecian heart with courage.
Thy gallant firmness I applaud, and fling

All female weakness from me.—

I would not, Hereward, for all the bliss
Thy tenderness can yield, could it with youth
Be lengthened out to ages, have one spot,
One shade of baseness on thy sun-bright honour.
Die nobly ! die, as thou hast ever lived,
The flower of chivalry, the pride of song,
The glory of thine Order and thy country !
This guard of innocence, thy gift, shall open
The gate of peace where tyrants never come !
No other way was there for swift escape

[*Stabs herself.*

From sufferings mortal strength could not sustain,
And reason keep her seat. Farewell but some
Brief moments, and our souls shall be united
Never to part again—my lord—my husband !

[*Dies.*

HEREWARD.

My brave Ionian love !—Now, tyrant, bid
Thy slaves conduct me to the rack or flames,—
To any death ; no human pangs can add
To those I now endure. These tears, the last
Mine eyes shall ever shed, beloved Zalmira,
Fall to embalm thy corse, as thus I kneel
And my last kiss on thy pale lips impress.

LANFRANC.

Yet in thy wrath, my gracious lord, relent.

HEREWARD.

Relent ? No ; let him on, till to the knee
He wade in innocent blood ; till on his head
He pluck down Heaven's red vengeance, and the curse
Of all succeeding ages on his memory.
His tiger heart no mercy feels.—But mark,

Thou Norman tyrant ! Never more that heart
Or joy or peace shall know ; for those who from
Thy loins have sprung, shall wring its blood-drops forth
With never ceasing anguish !—

Wherefore thus,
Zalmira, lingers my impatient spirit
So long behind thee ? Shall I wait to glut
The savage fierceness of these Norman dogs
With the wild throes of tortured agony ?
No ; thou dost point the way to shun their malice,
And thus I join thee ! thus triumphant come
To thee, my brave one ! thee, my bride, my wife !

[Stabs himself and dies.]

EDGAR THE ETHELING'S

Adieu to England.*



FAREWELL, farewell ! a long farewell to thee my island
home !

I'm on the sea, the mighty sea, amid its sheeted foam.
Deeply I sigh, as on thy cliffs the last faint sunlight falls,
To think on all the joys I've known within thy kingly halls ;
To think on all the bitter tears I've o'er thy miseries shed,
To see thee in a tyrant's chain, a bleeding captive led.

These brows have worn St. Edward's wreath, which thou
didst give to me,
As round the bannered throne of state thy nobles bowed
the knee.
The Norman now that crown doth wear, thy princes all
are slaves,
And Freedom's gallant warriors sleep cold in their blood-
stained graves.

There's glory on thy brow, as yields the setting sun to night,
So Freedom yet on thee shall shed her own refulgent light,
Nor shall that light, like yonder sun, in darkness e'er decline,
But, gathering strength from age to age, still with new
splendour shine.

* See Note 47, Page 435.

But I, a weary pilgrim-knight, must wander from thee far,
To fields where Arab host and steed rush on to deadly war :
Yes, I must leave thee for the shores of holy Palestine,
Where the palm-tree groves their branches wave o'er the red
and purple vine ;

Where the cedar rears its giant head, and the rose its crimson
flowers

Blends with the golden fruits that gem the dark-green citron
bowers :

Where burning suns the desert smite, and lurks the serpent
brood,

And the roaring lion seeks his prey in gloomy solitude.

The Red-cross gleams on my strong shield, and onward will
I go,

A warrior of the Sepulchre, to meet the Pagan foe :

But, England, thy blue mountains dim sink from my tearful
sight,

Farewell, my friends ! farewell, my home ! England, a long
good night !

Thy crown may rest on worthier brows, and glory on him
smile,

But never heart like mine shall love my own dear native isle !

And wheresoe'er I roam, my soul will fondly turn to thee,

In palm-tree bower, or myrtle grove, or on the lonely sea :

Should I a pilgrim on the sands of burning deserts sink,

Or be in Paynim dungeons chained, O still on thee I'll think !

And should I gain the threshold-stone of Salem's blessed
tomb,

I'll pray for thee and those I left with breaking hearts at home.

So may my prayers be heard, though I return to thee no more,

And Saxons with glad triumph shout, Freedom ! from shore
to shore.

Darkness hath veiled thee from my sight,—thou'rt lost amid
the sea ;

Ah, yonder gleams a ruddy flame,—thy last farewell to me !
O, there are hearts that yet burn bright for Edward's exiled
line,

Whose deeds through slavery's darkest gloom like yonder
beacon shine.

O, I could leap into the surge, to meet those gathered now,
My sail with signal-fires to greet, on that lone mountain's
brow.

It may not be ! The wild sea parts our kindred souls for
ever ;

In England's cause, on England's fields, shall we again meet
never !

The winds are up ! Like the eagle bird my proud barque
onward dashes,

And now o'er ocean's utmost verge yon earth-star faintly
flashes.

'Tis gone !—England, thy light is set beneath the dark sea's
brim,

Like he o'er whose red grave hath pealed the warrior's funeral
hymn :

Rush down, ye tempests, on the deep ! Earth has no home
for me,

And let my last dim resting-place be the caverns of the sea !

NOTES.

- (1) *this dull and savage isle,*
A land of vile barbarians p. 261.

Henry of Huntington says, that the English were all reduced to servitude and sorrow, and that to be called an Englishman was a reproach.

“William of Poictou, in describing the battle of Hastings, at which he was present, frequently denominates the English, the barbarians.”—*Dr. Henry*. Guitmund, when offered a bishopric in England by William, said in reply, “I know not how I can preside over those, whose foreign names and *barbarous language* I do not understand.”

- (2) *Go, bid thy slaves*
Some Saxon fair one to thy chamber bring. . p. 262.

“After that fatal battle, (Hastings,) the native English sunk into great contempt and wretchedness. Their estates were confiscated, their persons insulted, their wives and daughters dishonoured before their eyes. The Normans, says an ancient historian, were astonished at their own power, became as it were mad with pride, and imagined that they might do whatever they pleased to the English.”—*Ibid.*

Matilda, daughter of Malcolm Canmore, king of Scotland, and the Queen of Henry I., was compelled, during her education in England at this period, to wear the veil of a nun to secure her person from insult and violence.

- (3) *Give me the sweet Provençal tongue for love. . p. 262.*

At the period of the Norman conquest, France was moulding into two great divisions of language: that which, from our own connexion with it, and from its chief cultivators, we call Norman French; and that which is popularly called the Provençal, a peculiar and not ungraceful language.”—*Middle Ages.*

“Frankis spech is cald Romance,
 So saïs clerkes and men of France.”

Wartoni Hist. Poet.

It is plain that the Romances written by the French and Normans in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, received their name from the *Lingua Romana*, in which they were written."—See *Du Cange Gloss*.

- (4) *I can clear the moat,
Which circles yon great keep-tower, at a bound.* p.263.

See De St. Palaye's *Mem. Chiv*.

- (5) *And let those saddles with rich paintings decked
Be for our use to-day.* p. 265.

Peter de Blois, Archdeacon of Bath and Chaplain to Henry II. acquaints us, in one of his letters, "that the great barons and military men of his time, had their shields and saddles painted with the representations of battles."—*Hist. of Gr. Brit.*

"Even history-paintings, (among the Saxons,) representing the principal actions of the lives of great princes and generals, do not seem to have been very uncommon in England in this period. Edelfleda, widow of the famous Brithnod, Duke of Northumberland, in the tenth century, presented to the church of Ely a curtain, which had the history of the great actions of her deceased lord painted on it, to preserve the memory of his great valour, and other virtues."—*Ibid.*

- (6) *The mimic players that follow still the court.* . p. 265.

Religious plays, or mysteries, are of a very early date, as may be seen in Matthew Paris; for he says that Geoffrey, the Abbot of St. Alban's, when a young man at the school of Dunstable, (about 1110,) wrote a miracle-play of St. Catharine, and borrowed of the sacrist the holy vestments of the abbey, in which to dress the actors who performed his play.

The secular players, whom the monks envied for their popularity, and endeavoured to outshine in their sacred dramas, were the constant attendants of the court, and the welcome visitors of baronial castles, which were all courts on a smaller scale, the household of the earl being exactly similar to those of the king.

What these players were, and how refined and pure their exhibitions and compositions, may be gathered from the following quotation. It is not to be wondered that priests were at length forbidden to witness such grossness.

"Hinc mimi, falii vel saliares, balatrones, æmiliani, gladiatores, palæstritæ, gigandii, præstigiatores, malefici quoque multi, et tota joculatorum scæna procidit. Quorum adeo error invaluit, ut a præclaris domibus non arceantur etiam illi qui

obsænis partibus corporis, oculis omnium eam ingerunt turpitudinem quam erubescat videre vel cynicus. Quodque magis mirere nec tunc ejiciuntur, quando tumultuantes inferius crebo sonitu ærem fædant et turpiter inclusum, turpius produunt.”—*J. Sarisburiens.*

- (7) *While round the picture of my lady-love
On my broad shield displayed.* p. 267.

The shields of the Norman knights were richly ornamented with gold and splendid colours. The Count of Poictou, according to Malmesbury, had the portrait of his lady-love painted on his shield.

“Painting, in this period, was not confined to the use of the church, or to the portraits of great men; but was employed to various other purposes, particularly to ornamenting the apartments, furniture, *shields*, &c. of persons of rank and fortune.”—*Dr. Henry.*

- (8) *and Sherborne towers
A princely dwelling.* p. 268.

The following singular narrative relating to Sherborne Castle, was found among the manuscript papers of Canon Bampton, A. D. 1675 :—“ William the Conqueror created Osmond, one of his Norman commanders, the first Earl of Dorset, and bestowed on him Sherborne Castle, with the great estate appendant. He in his latter years becoming devout, was consecrated Bishop of Sarum, and gave to the See the said castle and estate; whose next successor, Roger, [Lord Chief Justice, Lord Chancellor, and Lord Treasurer,] falling into displeasure of King William Rufus, Sherborne Castle was confiscated, and continued in the crown thenceforward, till King Henry III., all those kings, (with their heirs and families,) being signally unfortunate and calamitous in their respective reigns or deaths, or both. Henry III. passed away the said manor to the noble family of the Montacutes, after, in the time of Edward III., created Earls of Salisbury; but in the interim, three of that family, possessors thereof, came either to untimely ends, or were otherwise very unfortunate: after which, Robert Wyville, in the reign of Edward III., then Bishop of Sarum, challenged from the said Earl of Salisbury, Montacute, Sherborne, and other lands, alienated from his See. The matter was ready to be decided by single combat, and when the Earl’s and Bishop’s champions, ready armed, were entering the lists, on the King’s interposition and mediation the Earl re-settled on that See the

said manor, &c., in consideration of a good sum paid him by the said Bishop, who with his successors quietly and happily enjoyed the same till the reign of King Edward VI., when John Salcot, alias Capon, then bishop, passed away either the inheritance or a well-nigh equivalent lease to the Protector, the Duke of Somerset, and he, soon after, to Sir John Horsey. The duke soon after losing his head, the said Sir John, then one of the greatest men of estate and reputation in the West of England, was so blasted, that either in that, or the following short reign of Queen Mary, he was so impoverished as to be outlawed, and not able to get bail for ten pounds: against whom the said Bishop Capon, that had conveyed to the Protector, preferred a bill in Chancery before Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York, Lord Chancellor, on whose allegation, well proved, that he had been overawed by being put in fear of his life, to pass that estate to the Protector, it was, by his decree, re-settled on the church. Sherborne being so returned unto, continued in the church of Sarum the remainder of Bishop Capon's time, and, I presume, Bishop Jewel's, his next successor; till after the statute in Queen Elizabeth's time, restraining churches and colleges from making any lease longer than twenty-one years, or three lives, except to the Queen, or her successors, (which clause is supposed to have been inserted by Sir Walter Raleigh's means, then a prime favourite, with a selfish eye to Sherborne, and which was afterwards most worthily expunged out of the act of King James); after which statutes, Sir Walter Raleigh procured the then bishop (Gheast, I imagine,) to grant a long lease to the Queen, which she forthwith reconveyed to him, of Sherborne; on whose attainder it returned to the crown, and was by King James bestowed on Prince Henry, who in a short time died in the flower of his years, immaturity, and not without some (I suppose groundless) suspicion of violence. On his death, King James bestowed the same on his favourite, Carr, Earl of Somerset, on whose attainder, his then majesty granted the same to John Lord Digby, the first Earl of Bristol, who died an exile for his loyalty; his son George, the next Earl, having not been any over prosperous possessor of it, and his son, the present Earl twice married, yet childless."

A character like that which we have drawn for Osmond, was one the most likely in after years to seek refuge from his conscience in holy orders.

(9) *Lord Hereward de Wake . . .*

He is the theme of every minstrel's song. . . . p. 268.

"The actions of this romantic adventurer were the favourite

subject of the popular songs of the Anglo-Saxons, and even of the Normans. They have now perished, but the Conqueror's Secretary gives him the character of an heroic patriot. When he had been made a commander in war, and a master of knights, he achieved so many brilliant and warlike adventures, he conquered his enemies so often, and he so frequently eluded them, that he merits PERPETUAL FAME. He supported the ruins of his falling country as long as it was possible, and he did not suffer it to fall unrevenged."—*Hist. Mid. Ag.*

- (10) *And, having made this demon knight my captive,
Send him to France, a foot-slave for some lady.* p. 269.

"Among the ancient knights, it was customary to send a conquered captive as a present to some prince or favourite lady."—*Vide Mons. de St. Palaye.*

- (11) *On thy base Saxon slaves—the coward English,
Whose name it is a foul disgrace to bear.* . . p. 271.

We have spoken before of the disgrace in which the haughty Normans held the English.

- (12) *A splendid palace purchased at proud Rome,
Where thy chief agents bribe the cardinals.* . p. 275.

"Odo was a man of boundless ambition, too worldly and daring for a bishop; but he was nobly munificent and possessed shining talents. His patriotism hoped that all Italy would be subject to the Normans, if a Norman obtained the chair of St. Peter."—See *Lingard.*

"He had earnestly sought the Popedom, and filled the wallets of the pilgrims with letters and money to purchase the dignity at Rome."—*Malm.*

- (13) *but never will I bow
In worldly homage to the proudest head
That wears her diadem.* . . . p. 276.

"When the Legate required him (William the Conqueror) to do homage to the Roman See, his answer to the Pope himself, the formidable Gregory VII., was, 'I have been unwilling to do fealty to you hitherto, and will not do it now; because I have never promised it, nor do I find that any of my predecessors performed it to yours.' He would not allow any ecclesiastical council in the kingdom to enjoin or forbid any thing but what he had first ordained."—*Hist. Mid. Ag.*

"By the resurrection and glory of the Deity," was William's constant oath.

- (14) *Now, driven for ever thence, doth naked roam
The dreary woods, and in their winter caves
Companion with the wolf. . . . p. 278.*

Sharon Turner says the facts which Ordericus relates of the miseries of the English, remind us of the sufferings occasioned by the French Revolution. "The most ancient and opulent families (English) were reduced to indigence; they pined for want on the very estates which had descended to them through a long line of illustrious ancestors."—*Russell's Hist. Eng.*

Ingulphus refuses to give a description of the horrible barbarities practised by his countrymen on the Saxons, because, he says, it could not be credited by succeeding times.

"In a word, a feudal baron was a king in miniature, and a barony was a little kingdom."—*Dr. Henry.*

"When the Anglo-Saxon nobles fled with their families to the woods, and sought subsistence by rapine, the districts which they could pervade became so unsafe, that every man was obliged to fortify his house like a besieged castle every night; and prayers were said by the elder of the family on the shutting of the doors and windows, as in a tempest at sea."—*Mid. Ages.*

The deeds of the Norman barons, from whom some English families are weak enough to pride themselves for being descended, may be found recorded in Huntington, William of Newbery, William of Tyre, and many other of the old chroniclers. Ignorant, bloody, and despotic as a negro king in the wilds of Africa, their castles were literally dens of robbers, from which they continually darted forth to plunder and destroy. One of these wretches was in the habit of carrying a concealed sword, with which he used, when in the humour, to stab, with loud shouts of laughter, any defenceless person he met; yet such was the extent of his power and the daring ferocity of his character, that he was applauded and admired. We read of another who would thrust out the eyes of children with his thumb, and impale alive both men and women against whom he entertained any dislike. Speed tells of one of the Earls of Warren, who scooped out with his thumb the eyes of his own son, a child, in the castle of Wareham.

Another of these earl-fiends, a Breton lord, named Giles de Laval, Marechal de Ritz, (the origin, one might imagine, of the tale of Blue Beard,) at so late a period as 1449, was accused of sorcery, and of having sold himself to the devil to obtain that

wealth, of which his prodigality had deprived him. He was condemned for the murder of many wives, whom he had married successively, and of more than an hundred children, and was burned alive in the presence of François I. Duke of Brittany, near Nantes. A thousand instances of the horrid atrocities of these titled thieves and murderers might be collected. Their manners and character were the same for ages throughout Christendom, wherever the feudal system was established. Henry I., the Lion of Justice, struck down many of these petty despots, and protected the ministers of the law: but they soon recovered their detestable power and privileges; and it is to the splendid institution of *modern* chivalry and knight-errantry, united with the writers of Romance, that the amelioration of the savage manners of Europe in the middle ages is chiefly to be attributed.

(15)

*Varangian! what**New mystic title's that? p. 285.*

During the troubles in England after the Norman invasion, numbers both of Saxon and Danish race fled the kingdom, and sought refuge in other countries. Many wandered as far as Constantinople, where they were honourably received by the Emperor, and enlisted into his guards. Ordericus says, "that the Anglo-Saxons sought Ionia, where they and their heirs served faithfully the sacred empire: and they remain till now among the Thracians with great honour, dear to the people, the senate, and the sovereign."

The Varangian guards of the Greek emperors were originally Scandinavian rovers, who conquered the ancient Russians. The first Waldimir advised them to embark for Greece, where they might find a nobler reward for their services than he could bestow. They were received at Constantinople, and employed in the duty of guards; "and their strength" (we quote Gibbon) "was recruited by a numerous band of their countrymen from the island of Thule. On this occasion, the vague appellation of Thule is applied to England; and the new Varangians were a colony of English and Danes, who fled from the yoke of the Norman conqueror. The habits of pilgrimage and piracy had approximated the countries of the earth; these exiles were entertained in the Byzantine court; and they preserved, till the last age of the empire, the inheritance of spotless loyalty, and the use of the Danish or English tongue. With their broad and double-edged battle-axes on their shoulders, they attended the Greek emperor to the temple, the senate, and the hippodrome; he slept and feasted under their trusty guard;

and the keys of the palace, the treasury, and the capital, were held by the firm and faithful hands of the Varangians."

- (16) *Bore off the holy vessels, crowns of gold,
With silver shrines, copes, cups, and gem-wrought robes,
And money-treasures which no man may count. . . p. 286.*

"Peterborough was called the golden city, and Hereward obtained such a splendid booty by the plunder of the abbey, as no adventurer in England had ever before acquired."—See *Saxon Chronicle*.

Ivo de Tailbois, or the Wood-cutter, was the Norman commander of that district.

- (17) *A strange unearthly woman, who hath long
Dwelt lonely on the bleak and desert moor. . . p. 288.*

The story of this witch, which will be told hereafter in the text, was an historical fact, and is related by Petrus Blessensis. —*Contin. Ing.* p. 125.

- (18) *At Haitheby their fleet collected waits. . . p. 289.*

Now Sleswic.

- (19) *Yonder comes our master,
The merchant of the household. . . . p. 292.*

"Some of the great barons of England, among the officers of their household, had one who was called the merchant, who transacted all the mercantile business of the baron to whom he belonged; disposing of his corn, cattle, and every thing he had to sell, and purchasing cloths, wines, spices, and every thing else he wanted to buy. It appears upon records, that these baronial merchants even engaged in foreign trade, and imported wines and other goods for which they were liable to pay customs."—*Dr. Henry*.

- (20) *As for your own coarse bread
Of buckwheat, horsebeans, barley-bran, and rye. p. 294.*

"The Anglo-Saxon monks of the abbey of St. Edmund, in the eighth century, ate barley-bread because the establishment could not afford of their feeding twice or thrice a-day on wheaten bread."—*Pierce Plowman*.

This author, who lived in the reign of Edward III., says, after a good harvest,

- "Woulde no beggar eat bread that in it beans were,
But of coket and clemantyne, or else clene wheate."

(²¹) *Renowned St. Dransius save me !* p. 299.

St. Dransius was the patron of combatants, and his shrine was at Soissons.

(²²) *What is he but a bearded Saxon born ?* p. 306.

“The Normans,” says Dr. Henry, “had a great aversion to beards, as they had a fondness for long hair. Among them to allow the beard to grow, was an indication of the deepest distress and misery. They not only shaved their beards themselves, but when they had authority, they obliged others to imitate their example. It is mentioned by some of our historians, as one of the most wanton acts of tyranny in William the Conqueror, that he compelled the English (who had been accustomed to allow the hair of their upper lips to grow) to shave their whole beards. This was so disagreeable to some of that people, that they chose rather to abandon their country than resign their whiskers.”

(²³) *By such a losel slave, whose every breath
Hangs on my will.* p. 319.

“The lives of slaves were at the entire disposal of their masters, who had the privilege of what was called pit and gallows, which was the power, at will, of inflicting every kind of punishment, death not excepted.”—Vide *Spelman and Du Cange Gloss. Voc. Baronix, &c.*

(²⁴) *Those cause-pleading clerks who throng the courts.* p. 327.

Malmesbury says that it was a proverb,—There is no priest who is not a cause-pleader. From this the clergy obtained the name of clerks.

“Rufus said to a baron who was going to the Crusades, and who hoped the king would leave his territory (Mans) in peace, ‘Go where you please, but I will have your city.’ The baron answered, that he possessed it by hereditary right, and if the king disputed that, he was ready to plead before the proper court. ‘I will plead with you,’ replied the king, ‘but my lawyers will be swords, and spears, and arrows.’”

(²⁵) *even the king would be
Amerced of half his revenue, were there not
Offences in his subjects.* p. 327.

See Madox, *Hist. Exchequer*, c. 13 :—“These offences were sometimes even for short memories, and for being ignorant

of that which could not be known. The Norman sovereigns were greatly enriched by these detestable ameracements, or fines. All lands were legally vested in the Norman crown, which always retained the *dominium directum*. The revenues of the crown arose from immense royal demesnes, reserved rents, wardships, marriages, reliefs, scutages, aids, escheats, vacancies, tallages, taxes, tolls, customs, oblations, amerciaments, moneyage, farms of counties, cities, towns, and corporations, queen-gold, impositions on the Jews, &c."

Madox says, "that the enormous sum of ten thousand marks, equal to one hundred thousand pounds in the present day, was paid to these Norman kings for the wardship and marriage of a single heiress!"

(26) *the adventuring bands*
That seek this sea-girt isle for battle-spoil. . p. 331.

During William the Norman's reign, adventurers from every neighbouring country flocked to this kingdom, to enrich themselves with the spoils of the conquered; and our elder historians lament the cruelties and oppression which they inflicted on the unhappy English.

"The English who survived, laid secret ambushes for the hated and suspected Normans, and killed them at every opportunity in woods and private places. The king and his Normans, in revenge, persecuted the English with cruel torments."—*Dial. Madox Excheq.*

(27) *Of Bristow's crowded mart, and her rich merchants,*
Who traffic in the sale of human flesh,
Will count their gold bezants to fill thy purse. p. 331.

The gold bezants and Byzantine solidi, were in general circulation both in the Saxon and Norman periods.

In *Camden's Remains* it is said, "that St. Dunstan bought an estate at Hendon in Middlesex of King Edgar, for which he paid two hundred byzantines. Greek and Byzantine coins have lately been dug up at Exeter.

Bristol was for ages the grand slave-mart of this kingdom. In the life of Wulfstan, who was Bishop of Worcester at the time of the Norman conquest, it is said, "You might have seen with sorrow long ranks of persons of both sexes, and of the greatest beauty, tied together with ropes, and daily exposed in the market of Bristol to sale. The young women they commonly got with child, and carried them to market in their pregnancy, that they might bring a better price. Nor were these men ashamed, O horrid wickedness! to give up their nearest relations,—nay, their own children to slavery."

It is curious and interesting to know, that the slave-trade in England has never by law been abolished; and that the wretch who leads his wife into the market with a rope about her neck, and sells her, has still the law on his side.

As late as the reign of Henry VIII., a bill was brought into the House of Lords, A.D. 1526, for the general manumission of the bondmen in England, read three times in one day, and **REJECTED**. It is therefore a fact, that the laws respecting slaves in this country continue in their ancient state; for although during the riots headed by Wat Tyler, in the reign of Richard the Second, they were revoked, yet no sooner were the rebels dispersed, than the pretended charters of manumission were all annulled by proclamation, and the next Parliament declared them void, reducing thousands of their fellow-subjects to their former state of hereditary bondage.

"Many of the slave-merchants were Jews, who found a good market for their Christian slaves among the Saracens in Spain and Africa. This occasioned several laws and canons to be made in England and other countries, against selling Christian slaves to Jews and Pagans."—*Commerce of the Saxons*.

The Jews are to this hour the chief slave-merchants in Asiatic Turkey, "culling," as Dr. Smith, a modern author, says in his account of that country, "the fairest flowers they can find, at almost any price that is demanded for them."

(28) *who all the heathen gave . . .*

*To be by us and by our children held
From age to age in thralldom. . . p. 332.*

"Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; and of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids."—*Levit. c. 25. v. 44.*

"Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession."—*v. 45.*

"And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; **THEY SHALL BE YOUR BONDMEN FOR EVER.**"—*v. 46.*

(29) *I mean his horn of power. . . p. 333.*

"In the East, the horn, which denoted triumph in war and dominion in peace, was worn on the forehead, fastened to a fil-

let, turban, or tiara, and in form resembled a modern candle-extinguisher."—Vide *Calmet*.

- (30) *I trust they have brought back a goodly store
Of living moneys. . . p. 335.*

"Living moneys" was the cant term in those days for slaves.

- (31) *Nor will I shrink, in such a cause, with thee
Bravely to fight, to conquer, or to die. . . . p. 338.*

When the Moslems invaded Africa, under Abdallah, and besieged Tripoli, the daughter of Gregory the Greek Præfect, "a maid of incomparable beauty and spirit, is said to have fought by his side: from her earliest youth she was trained to mount on horseback, to draw the bow, and to wield the scimitar; and the richness of her arms and apparel was conspicuous in the foremost ranks of the battle. Her hand, with an hundred thousand pieces of gold, was offered for the head of the Arabian general, and the youths of Africa were excited by the prospect of the glorious prize."

- (32) *Would we had never fled Iberia's clime!
But in some Moorish kingdom dwelt secure. . . p. 341.*

"But if the justice of Tarik (first Mahometan conqueror of Spain) protected the Christians, his gratitude and policy rewarded the Jews, to whose secret or open aid he was indebted for his most important acquisitions. Persecuted by the kings and synods of Spain, who had often pressed the alternative of banishment or baptism, that outcast nation embraced the moment of revenge: the comparison of their past and present state was the pledge of their fidelity; and the alliance between the disciples of Moses and Mahomet was maintained till the final era of their common expulsion."—*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The Jews boast, that the family of David is still preserved in Spain.

- (33) *that omened stone
Prophetic warning gives me to begone. . . p. 342.*

"Richard I. purchased in the Island of Cyprus a coffer of martyrs' bones, and certain gems *excellent for fore-knowledge*."

Gems were considered by the antients to possess magical virtues. Zoroaster is said to have celebrated the wonderful efficacy of the *Astroite* in all the arts of magic. Democritus

thought the *Erotylos* to possess great power in divination ; and Zachalias, the Babylonian, in his books dedicated to Mithridates, king of Pontus, believes that the destiny of man may be foreknown, accelerated, or reversed by gems.

Aubrey assures us, and with truth, that gems were used in magic or divination by the Druids.

- (34) *Our blessed Order whose source
Lies hidden where no mortal may approach. . p. 349.*

See the Dissertation on the Antiquity of Free-masonry at the end of these notes.

- (35) *The strange enchantment of the desert-fiend. . p. 354.*

Marco Polo, in his account of the great desert of Kobi, speaking after the superstitious belief of his own age, and that of the Tartars, tells of its wonders and horrors, its strange appearances and *evil spirits*, that enticed travellers from their path with the sound of musical instruments and the clashing of arms, and then left them to perish with hunger in those dreadful solitudes.

- (36) *with Saxon slaves
In every hovel. . . p. 357.*

“When Malcolm, king of Scotland, returned from ravaging Northumberland, there was hardly a village, or even a house, in Scotland, wherein you might not meet with an English slave or slaves.”—*Hoveden*, p. 259.

- (37) *England, my lords,
With all her countless riches. . . p. 361.*

When William, after his victories in England, returned to Normandy, “he was visited by the Regent of France, whose courtiers were astonished at the beauty of the long-haired English, and at the rich gold-embroidered dresses, and gold and silver vessels obtained from England.”

- (38) *And made the lion of the south to tremble. . . p. 361.*

On the banner of William the Conqueror was represented two leopards, or lions passant-gardant. The French call a lion passant-regardant, a *lion léopardé*; and a lion rampant, a *léopard lionné*.

- (39) *Those who have heard the melodies and lays
Of tuneful Troubadour. . . p. 367.*

Bouche, in his *History of Provence*, says that the Troubadours were esteemed in the twelfth century throughout Europe, and that the credit of their poetry rose to its highest point about the middle of the fourteenth century. Those who wish to know more of the Troubadours, may consult St. Palaye's *Hist. Troub.*, and Roscoe's Sismonde de Sismondi's *History of the Literature of the South of Europe*.

- (40) *It is not in your ignorance to bestow them. . . p. 369.*

William the Conqueror and his Norman barons, notwithstanding their affected contempt of the English, compared with Alfred and the Saxons of the eighth and ninth centuries, were as ignorant as the horses they rode on. Malmesbury asserts that William II. was completely illiterate, never having heard any history. "Non erat ei tantum studii vel otii, ut literas unquam audiret."

- (41) *For well knew they his harp alone bestowed
Fame which can never die. . . p. 369.*

"Kings may dignify, dishonour, or reward merit; heroes and statesmen may live awhile in the mouths of men; while the vulgar, like the foliage of the grove, drop unnoticed. Literary genius alone can confer the unfading wreath of fame on itself and others; can bestow it alike on the prince or peasant; crown with deathless glory, or brand with eternal infamy. . . . Whim, caprice, or fashion generally governs the world's opinion concerning living authors. The favourites of the day have seldom stood the test of time. The immortal *Paradise Lost*, was contemptuously said, by an author of considerable eminence, to have been written by *one Milton, a blind man.*"—*Exeter Essays*.

"A poet should be regarded as an intellectual king, and in like manner with our temporal monarch, should be supported at the public charge, if he do not chance to be provided with a sufficient fortune of his own. It should be remembered, that in devoting himself to poetry, he enters, *in these times*, upon the most barren of all possible employments. In any other avocation, the industrious and successful struggler may attain rank (that is, such as kings can give) and fortune,—ay! even in the lowest ranks of literature, whereof a couple of bad magazine writers, B—— and M——, are signal examples. In poetry only is it that the man of highest genius can obtain

no more than trifling emolument and empty fame : I say trifling emolument, because notwithstanding the array of figures which might be marshalled against the declaration, I maintain that there is no labourer whatsoever so inadequately rewarded as the poet. He is not allowed for his productions the benefit of the ordinary standard of value. The price of all other commodities is enhanced by rarity ; the diamond always fetches a price proportionate to the scarcity of the gem ; the singer, with the rare voice of a Sontag or a Tamburini, is always enormously rewarded. But the poet, although to be produced only by three throes of time,—although his inestimable works must necessarily be few,—the poet is not permitted to enjoy the advantage of a remuneration in the direct ratio of the scarcity of the article in which he deals ; and this, notwithstanding he give you, not an idle bauble which may be lost or stolen, or a fleeting effort of the voice, which shall put forth sounds of sweet music to perish in the silence of death ; but a woven spell of words, which shall be ever potent, and which shall remain a possession of delight to your children's children unto the end of time."—*Anonymous*.

As a proof of the similarity of one age with another, in the twelfth century we find Ignaur  and Geraud de Borneill disputing respecting their poetry. "I would not have general and indistinct approbation," said Ignaur  ; "I wish that fools may slight my compositions, and I prefer reputation from a few dozen minds, to general and extensive fame."—*Hist. Troub.*

(42) *For this I'll have, ere long, his eyes torn out. . . p. 370.*

Henry I., A.D. 1124, condemned the minstrel or Troubadour, Luke de Barra, to have his eyes pulled out, for having written defamatory ballads against him. The cruel sentence was accordingly executed on the unfortunate satirist, who died of the wounds he received in struggling with the executioner."—*Hist. Brit.*

(43) *I'd have thee placed upon some steeple-top
Where bells were wanting. . . p. 379.*

"The tolling of a bell was supposed to have had miraculous effects,—to keep the spirits of darkness from assaulting believers ; to dispel thunder ; and prevent the Devil from molesting either the church or congregation : and hence they were always rung in time of storm, or other attack, to paralyse the fiend, whether the elements or mortal man, by the hallowed intonation."—*The Round Towers*.

- (44) *a maiden's glove*
Or scarf canst fetch and carry. . . p. 381.

In Danish history (*Bartholin*, l. 3. c. 4.) is an account of a witch who was celebrated for her skill in divination, called Thorbiorga. In the enumeration of her articles of dress, it is said she had a pair of gloves of a white cat's skin, with the fur on the inside.

In Montfaucon's *Monumens de la Monarchie Française*, are four full-length portraits of William the Conqueror, his Queen, and his two sons, Robert and William. They are copied from the walls of a chapel in the abbey of St. Stephen at Caen. These frescoes are believed to have been taken from life. Ducarel, describing them in his *Anglo-Norman Antiquities*, says that Duke Robert was painted standing on a hound, clad in a tunic, his head covered with a bonnet, and on his right hand, which was covered with a glove, stood a hawk. William, his brother, had also a glove on his left hand.

- (45) *To save my royal kinsman—save my nation*
From universal slaughter! . . . p. 385.

According to some of the old chroniclers, during William's first visit to Normandy the English, goaded to desperation by the injustice and cruelty of the Norman chiefs, held secret consultation, and formed a plot to repeat the massacre of the Eve of St. Brice. The Normans throughout the kingdom were to be destroyed in one day. This was frustrated by the sudden return of the Conqueror. Such bloody scenes were ages afterwards enacted in Sicily, well known by the name of the Sicilian Vespers; and had, ages before the Eve of St. Brice, been perpetrated by the celebrated Mithridates, who caused all the Romans in his dominions to be murdered in one night, when, as Plutarch asserts, 150,000 perished; but Appian says 80,000. Verily, there is nothing new under the sun!

- (46) *Thus undermined*
By captive fires, some lofty mountain falls. . . p. 391.

"We are indebted to M. de Humboldt for the knowledge of many facts of this nature. We have seen the Carguairazo, in 1698, crumble away, and overwhelm the neighbouring district; and ancient tradition relates that the volcano Altar de los Colanes, in Peru, the height of which is said to have surpassed that of Chimborazo, sunk down after eight years continual eruption."—*D'Aubuisson*, t. i. p. 213.

“ In the county of Monmouth, Marclay-hill, anno 1571, roused itself up, and, for the space of three days together moving and showing itself with roaring noise in a fearful sort, and overturning all things that stood in its way, advanced itself forward, to the wondrous astonishment of the beholders.”—*Camb. Brit.* p. 630.

(47) *and on the plains*
Of Palestine fight bravely till I die. . . p. 395.

“ Edgar applied to William the Conqueror for leave to go to the Holy Land, in company with Robert, the son of Godwin, to fight the Infidels. He immediately consented ; he loaded him with presents, and Edgar set out with a splendid equipage, accompanied by two hundred English gentlemen, who, having been deprived of their estates in their own country, resolved to try their fortunes in other climes.”—*Russ. Hist. Eng.* vol. ii.

(48) *I drove*
The Apulian Normans, by fierce Guiscard led,
Back to the Italian shores. . . p. 397.

“ Some of the more adventurous even entered into the service of the Grecian Emperor, delighted to meet, in practical warfare, the Normans who were assailing his territories. The Emperor needing military assistance against his invaders, employed them in his armies. They served their new sovereign with fidelity, and obtained a permanent settlement in his dominions.”

“ It was Robert Guiscard, who had established the Norman dukedom in Apulia, that was attacking Greece. The Emperor began to build for his English allies a town beyond Constantinople ; but he called them back into his city when the Normans endangered it, and delivered to them a palace with royal treasures.”—*Hist. Mid. Ag.*

(49) *England hath groaned, thou ruthless fiend, to see*
Thy tender mercy to her wretched sons. . . p. 397.

See Note 14.

(50) *Like the pure love of youthful Troubadour,*
Across the sunlight of whose angel-dreams
Comes no unholy shadow. . . p. 401.

“ Rambaud de Vasqueiras, a Troubadour, was in love with the Lady Beatrix, sister of Boniface, Marquis of Monferrat, and

the wife of the Lord of Del Carat. When at length he ventured to declare his passion, the lady replied, 'Welcome, my new-found lover ; try more and more by your conversation and actions to render yourself valuable : I retain you for my knight.' This accords perfectly with the ideas of chivalry, in its original and most palmy state. When these lovers quarrelled, her brother the Marquis reconciled them. We see by this, the gallantry of the poet was not of a suspicious nature." —*Hist. de Troub.*

Some of these poets carried their Platonic and romantic attachments to a most extravagant height. Vidal, of whom there is extant one of the most beautiful pieces to be found in the remains of these Troubadours, assumed the name of Loupe, or wolf, in honour of Louve de Penautier, a lady of Carcussonne, and for her sake ridiculously submitted to be hunted in the skin of a wolf by the mountain-shepherds and their dogs ; and though at last cruelly mangled, would not suffer the dogs to be taken off him till he was almost killed. He was then carried home to his mistress dead, as it was supposed. The lady and her husband, however, took such care of him, though they laughed heartily at his folly, that he perfectly recovered.

END OF THE VARANGIAN.

DISSERTATION
ON THE
ORIGIN, ANTIQUITY, AND DESCENT
OF
Free-Masonry.

THE learned Brother Oliver, in his *History of Initiation*, says,—
“Nought earthly could have saved Masonry from utter extinction if, at the critical moment ‘when its departing light made a last expiring effort for renewed existence, it had not been invigorated by the ESSENES, a well-intentioned sect of people among the Jews, who took charge of the forsaken institution, and cherished it in their bosom until its rays of light once more began to illuminate the surrounding darkness.” What proofs and what authorities are there for this? And why, we would ask, was Masonry preserved among this sect more than among the other Jewish sects,—the Pharisees, the Karæites, the Sadducees, or the Therapulæ? the latter of which came by far the nearest of any of the Hebrew schools, in the simple manner of their religious ceremonies, to the primitive Christians. Indeed their sermons or discourses, and the hymns which they sang in their chapels, or meetings for public worship, have led many to maintain that they were a sect of Alexandrine Jews converted to Christianity, who devoted themselves to a monastic life. But this is clearly confuted; for Philo, previous to the appearance of Christianity in Egypt, speaks of this sect as having been long established. We would now inquire, who and what these Essenes were, said by Brother Oliver to have been the sole preservers of Free-Masonry.

These Essenes* were strictly an ascetic or monastic fraternity. They had a perfect community of goods, and every one admitted into their society lodged his whole property in a common treasury. In their refectory they partook of the food dealt out by their Servitor in perfect silence ; and so rigorous were they in their observance of the Sabbath, that they would neither kindle a fire, remove a vessel though it stood in their way, or even ease themselves, till *Shobbos*, according to the Hebrew phrase, was put out, or the Sabbath ended. To be touched by any one not belonging to their sect, or for an old man of their Order to be touched by a young person, they held to be an impurity which required ablution. All domination they held to be unjust, and inconsistent with the laws of nature, who had produced all her sons in a state of equality. So averse were they to war, that they would not suffer any of their body to be employed in manufacturing military weapons, or instruments of any kind. No one was admitted as a member of this fraternity, without passing through a course of preparatory discipline out of the society for one year, and afterwards approving his constancy by two years' regular attendance within the college. After this, if he was judged worthy, he was received a *sa* brother, with a solemn oath to conform to the discipline and observe the rules of the society, to guard its sacred books and the names of the angels, and never divulge its mysteries.

What was meant, in the oath administered to the noviciate, by guarding the angels, may be conjectured from the notion which prevailed in the East, and in Egypt, concerning the power of demons or angels over the affairs of the world. The Essenes having adopted the visionary fancies of their Pagan neighbours concerning these superior natures, imagined themselves able, by the magical use of the names of angels, to perform supernatural wonders, and that the due observance of these mystical rites was the charge which they bound themselves by oath to take of the sacred names of angels. Added to this, they lived, or at least a certain number of them, in a

* We speak of the Jewish Order in Egypt. Other fraternities, under various names, existed in almost every part of the ancient civilized world, in many points similar in their institutions.

state of *celibacy*, and adopted the children of other men, to educate them in their own principles and customs. (Vide *Brucker*.)

These Essenes seem to have been refugees, who fled into Egypt from the oppression of Gedaliah, the governor of Judea under the king of Assyria; where they, in length of time, incorporated the doctrines and institutions of Moses, with the dogmas and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Egyptians.

Now granting these monks, for such they were, to have been the sole preservers of Masonry, of which there is as little appearance among them as among the monks of La Trappe, whom they far more closely resembled than Masons, did they send missionaries to Britain and Ireland to establish and preserve the Order in these islands? That they did so few, we imagine, will be inclined to maintain; and if maintained, where are the authorities and proofs? If they did not, then is it incontestibly certain that Free-Masonry must have descended to us from another source.

We unhesitatingly declare it to be our firm belief, that Masonry descended to us, through the Druids, from the sublime Mysteries of the antients;* we mean the Eastern sages of the remotest antiquity. There is, in fact, no other way rationally and consistently to account for its nature and origin. With regard to these ancient Mysteries, we do not believe one word respecting the degrading and disgusting impurities said to have been allowed and practised in those awfully solemn and secret assemblies. Those deeds of darkness only existed in the minds of the *uninitiated* and vulgar, who scandalized every thing which they could not comprehend, and to the knowledge of which they were not permitted to attain; while, unfortunately, the old Christian Fathers, not content with condemning the absurdities and impiety of the vulgar belief, too often rashly denounced what was good with that which was evil,

* The Druids retained among them many usages similar to those of Masons. "In conformity to the ancient practices of the fraternity, we learn that they held their assemblies in woods and groves, and observed the most impenetrable secrecy in their principles and opinions. We shall therefore leave the experienced Mason to make his own reflections on the affinity of their practices to the rites established among the fraternity."—*Preston*.

and consequently, through zeal and want of true information, were unsparing in their invectives against the ancient Mysteries.

As one proof, among many, of their want of requisite knowledge on these subjects, finding that baptism was a religious rite practised by certain heathen nations, they maintained that the Spirit of Evil had taught them this ceremony in imitation of the Christian form. And finding, also, that the Cross had been a sacred sign or symbol ages before Christianity, they did not fail to impute this token to a similar origin.

It is well known that the Christians were, like the initiated in the ancient Mysteries, long accused of committing the most horrid crimes at their nocturnal meetings, under the veil of awful secrecy. (See *Mosheim's Ecclesiastical Hist.*, and *Lardner's Works*, in 10 vols.) With regard to certain historical authorities which may be brought against us, knowing, as all acquainted with history must know, that half that portion which is supposed to be authentic is mingled with invention, as Quintillian, Herodotus, and Strabo have manifested long ago, those authorities have as little weight with us, as the ridiculous aspersions and base calumnies cast in every possible way, by the *exoteric* and the apostate, on the sublime and sacred mysteries of modern Free-Masonry; or the accusations of infanticide and brutal pollution propagated against the early Christians. But granting History all the authority which she has a right to claim, we shall find that she has lifted up her voice loudly in defence of the ancient Mysteries, and declared them to have been sublime, religious, and undefiled.

What were some of the tenets of Pythagoras, who was initiated into the ancient Mysteries?—To obtain a knowledge of divine things, by reflecting on death, by purifying the soul of its imperfections, and the practice of virtue; to endeavour after the discovery of truth, and to imitate, as far as human nature will allow, the perfections of God. He impressed on his disciples the omnipresence of the Deity, the immortality of the soul, and the necessity of *personal holiness* to prepare them for a future state of happiness in heaven.

From whom did he learn these doctrines, which every good Mason must revere? Not from the prophet Ezekiel, as Cle-

mens, and others of the old Fathers have averred, such assertions being nothing but pious frauds. "We must dismiss," says Brucker, "as wholly incredible, the stories of his visiting the temple on Mount Carmel, and remaining there several days without food, passing among the inhabitants for a good demon, and obtaining from them religious honours; and also of his proceeding into the country of Judea, and there going through several ceremonies of the Mosaic law." Pythagoras obtained these doctrines from the same Eastern fountain of divine learning whence Plato drew all his religious instruction, and the ground-work of his sublime philosophy.

The ancient Mysteries shadowed forth the doctrine of regeneration and the new-birth, of a Redeemer or Saviour, of the resurrection, and of immortality in a future state of rewards and punishments, as shall, ere long, be more fully shown. "The aspirant to these Mysteries was required to possess a character of irreproachable morality." (*Cic. de Leg. et Pers. Sal.*) "For as they were declared to be without the least stain of impurity, a dissolute candidate was uniformly rejected with contempt, as calculated to bring disgrace on the institution, and involve it in all the opprobrium of public scorn. The probationary tests were strict and solemn. The most minute colloquial examinations were instituted to corroborate the testimony of others; so that it would require all the arts of successful imposture to elude the rigid investigations of the Mystagogue into the aspirant's former life, character, and conduct." (*Plut. in Apoph. et Lacon.*) The ceremonies were opened by the officiating priest, who inquired publicly, "Who is fit to be present at this ceremony?" to which it was answered, "Honest, good, and harmless men." He then rejoined, "Holy things are for holy people: let us pray."

The aspirant then underwent a lustration; and having been purified, he was introduced into the Sacellum, brilliantly illuminated and shining with a divine splendour, as a striking symbol of the mind of the initiated, now emerged from pristine darkness into a full scientific and moral illumination; for he was greeted by the envied appellation of Eoptes, being fully instructed in the nature and attributes of the Divinity, and the

doctrine of a future state. The unity of the Godhead was inculcated, and during the process of celebration the following truth was repeatedly proclaimed, "There is ONE GOD, ONE POWER, ONE RULER over all."

"In the Indian Mysteries, the aspirant was *to keep his body pure*, have a tongue of *good report*, to observe a passive obedience in receiving the doctrines and traditions of the Order, and the firmest secrecy in maintaining inviolable its hidden and abstruse mysteries. Among the Persians, the probationer entered the cavern of initiation *at the point of a sword presented to his naked breast.*"

"Their benefactors, or national gods, were represented in the Mysteries as existing in Elysium, enjoying eternal youth and never-ceasing pleasure; whilst wicked men, termed the offspring of Typhon, or the Devil, were exhibited in the darkest shades of Tartarus, tormented with the punishment of fire and brimstone. Here the Mystagogue expatiated on the benefits of virtue, and dreadful nature of vice."—*Antiquities of Free-Masonry*. What can be a nearer approach to the purity and truths of Christianity?

Thus far we have brought forward an unwilling witness to the innocence of these ancient Mysteries, even Brother Oliver himself; and numerous others are to be found of equal authority. And can it be possible, after this, for a moment to believe the absurd tales and glaring falsehoods which have been echoed from age to age by ignorance and prejudice respecting these Mysteries? We say it is utterly impossible that such unquestionable testimonies as Brother Oliver has here admitted, can for a moment be, in any way, reconciled with the gross impurities which he has in the same work collected together, from those authors who were avowedly hostile to these solemn and sublime institutions. No: thickest darkness and the blaze of a meridian sun might as easily be united.

As one proof of these contradictions, the above author says, (*Hist. of Free-Mas.*) "The pupils, or aspirants, were thus confirmed in the superstitious worship of false gods;" and in another page, "The Mystæ then taught, that the objects they worshipped had been mortals like themselves, and had not the

most distant claim to the rites of divine worship. The UNITY OF THE GODHEAD was then inculcated, together with the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments."

"Virtue, however," as quaintly, though truly, says the learned author of the *Round Towers of Ireland*, "is its own reward;" and as the authority of Cicero, having himself been a priest, ought to have some weight in this discussion, it is no small impetus to the cause of truth to hear this pre-eminent man assign to the efficacy of the precepts inculcated in these Mysteries "the knowledge of the God of nature, the First, the Supreme, the Intellectual, by which men had been reclaimed from rudeness and barbarism to elegance and refinement, and been taught not only to live with comfort, but to die with better hopes." From what pulpit in Christendom will you hear better or more orthodox truths? Where will you find the Gospel more energetically enunciated?

"I have already redeemed the character of those ceremonies," says the same author in another place, "from the sinister imputations which attached to their *secrecy*. An apprehension that their publication would subvert the popular belief, or a supposed indelicacy in their tenour, were the *mildest* constructions which the uninitiated would afford them. Though secure in the sufficiency of my former proofs, I cannot resist taking support from an article in a very talented publication of our day, in which the writer confirms the fact of their worth and their purity: 'From the whole concurrent testimony of ancient history,' says he, 'we must believe that the Eleusinian Mysteries were used for *good* purposes, for there is not an instance on record that the honour of an initiation was ever obtained by a very bad man. The Hierophants, the higher priests of the Order, were always exemplary in their morals, and became sanctified in the eyes of the people.'"

Now we ask, would the virtuous, pious Marcus Antoninus have regarded these Mysteries, when he desired to clear himself to the world of the murder of Avidius Cassius, had they merited the odium cast upon them? No: this one instance, dissolves all the calumnies of their enemies into empty air. Our Reverend Brother Oliver is compelled to acknowledge,

that in the Eleusinian Mysteries "they perpetually inculcated that it was the chief business of the Mysteries to restore the soul to its original purity, and made every thing tend to show the necessity of virtue;" yet he maintains that these very Mysteries were the sink of all iniquity. But the clue which leads to the cause of the opprobrium cast upon them, is easily to be found. Their secrets were never revealed till the later ages, when after their suppression, like that of the Order of the Knights Templars, they were falsely accused, from interested and mistaken motives, of deeds which had never been committed beneath the dark veil of their midnight secrecy.

Were these the days of ancient Greece, Brother Oliver would not so easily escape for his vituperative desecration of the Mysteries as Æschylus did, when he was threatened in the theatre by the people to be torn in pieces, for daring even to offer a slight disrespect to those institutions; nor could he plead the excuse which saved the poet, namely,—ignorance, and *uninitiation*.

Nor must be here forgotten the great Reformer and Archimagus of the Persian Mysteries,—Zoroaster, whose sacred cavern is said to have been richly adorned with mysterious emblems and astronomical figures of dazzling splendour. It is not to be denied that this sublime philosopher was, like Pythagoras, a perfect Mason. The three columns Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty, brought to perfection by the Greek sage, were to be found in the Elysian sanctuary of the Persian, which was supported by those of Eternity, Fecundity, and Power; all equally emblematical of the attributes of Omnipotence.* That this Zoroaster, whose renown has been extended wherever knowledge has made her appearance, was a Jew, and a disciple of Daniel at Babylon, as Hyde, Prideaux, and others have asserted, is an idle and ridiculous fiction, borrowed from the Arabian writers, which cannot for a moment obtain credence with any one well studied in antiquity. "Even Plato, the first Grecian writer who mentions Zoroaster, speaks of him

* "It was conceived of the Father, that all things should be divided into three; and all things were so divided. The Trinity is composed of Virtue, Wisdom, and Truth, which knows all things."—*Zoroa. Orac.*

as a sage of very remote time ; which is also established by the evidence of Hemippus and Eudoxus, preserved by Pliny. The second Zoroaster, supposed by Toucher to have flourished under Darius Hystaspes, is the mere figment of some later Grecian authors of little credit. On the whole, we are compelled to carry back Zoroaster to the period when Bactriana was an independent monarchy, a period anterior to the very commencement of the Median empire, as related by Herodotus."—*Prof. Heeren.*

At the conclusion of the Persian and Chaldean Mysteries, the aspirant was sworn to preserve the secret rites of Mithras inviolate. The sacred words were entrusted to him, of which the ineffable TETRACTYS, or name of God, was the chief, and he was instructed in the sacred prophecy of Zoroaster, or Zeradusht, namely,—That in future years a great prophet should appear on earth, the Desire of all nations, born of a virgin, and whose advent should be ushered in by a new and blazing star in the heavens, the radiance of which the sun should not extinguish at mid-day. The newly-instructed aspirant was strictly enjoined, should its appearance happen in his day, to follow this splendid guide until he discovered the new-born infant, to whom he was to offer sacrifices and valuable gifts, and before whom he was to fall in humble adoration, and worship the incarnation of Mithras the Mediator, the second person in the Trinity.*

It was this Masonic prophecy which led the wise men of the East to the stable of Bethlehem ; and such were the doctrines promulgated in all the ancient Mysteries of the Gentiles,—doctrines perfectly consonant with Christianity. As the knowledge and worship of one true God was necessary to the preservation of speculative Masonry, so is it perfectly undeniable that this knowledge was communicated to the aspirant in the Mysteries

* There is one fragment of the antiquity of Free-Masonry, and that among the ancient Persians, which has been hitherto overlooked, namely,—that Hystaspes commanded his son Darius to inscribe on his tomb, MASTER OF THE MAGI, (Amme. Marcell., l. 28, c. 6.) another proof that, like many of our kings, the Persian princes were Free-Masons. In fact, they were not allowed to take possession of the government, till they had been initiated into the Mysteries, and enrolled among the Magi.

of all civilized nations. "Christianity," says Brother Oliver, "or the system of Salvation through the atonement of a crucified Mediator, was the main pillar of Free-Masonry ever since the fall." And where was this main pillar to be found? Why in the secret Mysteries of the Gentiles. It can there be traced, to the glory of the Craft, through all ages up to the present hour; and in no other way can the connecting links of this venerable Mystery by any possible means be discovered. Even the introduction of the Phallic rites were not in their nature obscene and degrading.

"Those Mysteries of faith," says O'Brien, "to which the initiated alone had access, and which, disguised in the habiliments of symbols and veils, were neither more nor less than representative forms of *Generation* and *Production*. Such was the whole substance of this philosophical creed, which was not, as many have imagined, a *ritual of sensuality*, but a *manual of devotion*, as simple in its exercise as it was pious in its intent,—a Sabeian veneration, and a symbolical gratitude."

That a veneration for the symbols of the creative power of the Deity might have sometimes degenerated into excess and licentiousness, we do not deny; and that such grossness also profaned the Hebrew worship we have sufficient testimony: "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled *at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*."—"All their wickedness is in Gilgal," (the circle of sacrifice.) "As troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent, for they commit *lewdness*."

High time is it that the Augean accumulation of falsehood and slander, which superstition, ignorance, and credulity have heaped on the ancient Masonic Mysteries, should be swept away, that their real intent, their doctrines and institutions may appear in their original and untainted purity.

But Brother Oliver tells us, that Plato saw all Athens "drunk" at one of the Grecian festivals. He might: and were a sober Brahmin to enter the gin-palaces of our own metropolis on a Christmas Eve, he would exclaim that, on the anniversary of the birth of their Redeemer, all London was

“drunk!” But this only subverts what Mr. Oliver would confirm. Plato never saw all Athens “drunk” at the *secret Mysteries*, simply because not half the Athenians were ever admitted to their celebration.

“In the dark ages of the heathen world,” says our worthy brother again, “we discover few appearances of Masonry, except in Egypt, Greece, Phœnicia, and Rome.” (*Antiqu. of Free-Mas.*) O, then we *do* discover it still among the heathen! Well, if such be the case, and it can be discovered by this author in all these places, we will try, ere long, if it cannot be discovered also in the Druidical islands of the West. We must first, however, introduce another quotation from the same source. “It is a remarkable evidence of the connexion of Masonry with religion, that in proportion as the knowledge of the true God has declined in all the countries of the earth, Masonry has also receded from the view. And it may be safely added, that no certain traces of genuine Masonry have been found to exist in any country, or amongst any people who have *altogether* renounced the true worship of God, and set up an idol in his stead.” To all this we most readily subscribe; for, in the first place, we never yet heard of one nation, pretending to any degree of civilization, that did not acknowledge, above all their subordinate deities, demons, and angels, One Supreme and Universal Lord of All. Even the Sclavonian tribes, amid their gross idolatry, entertained, as the German historians affirm, this sublime belief. That such was the doctrine of the ancient Mysteries in India, Persia, Egypt, Phœnicia, and Greece, Brother Oliver has himself unequivocally proclaimed; and that the Druids entertained the same faith, we are fully prepared to prove.

We have already avowed it to be our firm opinion, that Free-Masonry descended to us from the Druids, nor is there any other channel, that we can discover, by which it could have been conveyed down to the present day. Let us, then, inquire what these Druids were, and what their religious tenets.

“The Druids were not of the Epicurean school, but were firm believers in a Supreme Being, and, in general, held the doctrines of Pythagoras.”—*Celt. Druids.*

“Let not the pious Christian be alarmed at the idea of Druidism being still alive in this island; but let him examine it a little, and he will find that the British patriarchal religion is, no more than that of Noah and Abraham, inimical to Christianity. There is in Druidism, what seems extremely repugnant to the manners, and even the religion of this age,—a SEVERE, INFLEXIBLE MORALITY.”—*Dr. Owen Pugh's Pref. to Lly. Hen.* Selden himself has declared that the Druids were, *toto cælo*, of the same school as the patriarchs.

Dr. Meyrick says, “The system of Druidism embraced every religious and philosophical pursuit which was then known, and had a further tendency to spread liberty, peace, and happiness among mankind.”

“In a word, the primitive religion of the Druids,” says Brother Oliver himself, “was purely patriarchal, and they retained some knowledge of the redemption of mankind through the death of a Mediator.”—(*Hist. Init.*) Most certainly they did, for such were the tenets and faith of the ancient sages and the initiated, from India to Peru. Let those who doubt it, consult the sacred books of the Brahmins, or what is less difficult, peruse that wonderful volume, “The Round Towers of Ireland,” and they will be compelled, however reluctantly, to own the truth,—a truth confirmed by the high authority of the learned Faber.

Dr. Stukeley says, that the religion of the Druids was so nearly allied to primitive Christianity, that they easily and readily embraced its doctrines. The same author, speaking of the fable of Astarté, or Venus and Adonis, says, “The matters are derived from most ancient traditions and prophetic notices of a Messiah, who was to suffer death for mankind; moreover they were acquainted that it was by *crucifixion*, and that at the time of the vernal Equinox. *All this our BRITISH DRUIDS well knew.*” We could quote a host of other authorities, equally conclusive, had we room for their insertion.

Were not, then, the Druids as worthy to be the repositories of the sacred mysteries of Masonry as the half heathen, half Mosaic Essenes? Undoubtedly they were; and if the religion by them professed were patriarchal, and the patriarchs were

Masons, it indubitably follows that the Druids were also of the same noble Order. As we are pleased with unwilling witnesses, we shall again quote the Rev. Mr. Oliver.

“The Druids were schoolmasters, fortune-tellers, and Free-Masons also, though the name was not known in the ages when they flourished. They certainly did practise a science derived from Free-Masonry, and adapted to the same object—**THE WORSHIP OF THE DEITY**, but deteriorated.”—(*Hist. Init.*) This is granting nearly all we contend for, and overthrows in toto the quotation taken from this author at the beginning of our Dissertation; namely,—that nothing earthly could have saved Masonry from utter extinction, had not the Essenes cherished it in their bosom. “The Druidical memoranda,” says the same author, on the authority of Brother Noorthouck, “were made in the Greek character; for the Druids *had been taught Masonry by Pythagoras himself*, who had communicated its arcana to them, under the name he had assigned to it in his own country.”

This again, if true, would annihilate the theory respecting the Essenes being the sole preservers of Free-Masonry. But the original author, when he wrote the above quotation, was wandering in the dark mazes of fancy and error. And here we may observe, that Aristobulus, who tells us that Pythagoras transferred the Hebrew doctrines and ceremonies into his own system, deserves no more credit than Geoffrey of Monmouth; his assertions on this point being of equal veracity with those of Jamblichus, who averred that Pythagoras, in his youth, was received by many as the Son of God.

Pythagoras never instructed the Druids in the secrets of Free-Masonry, nor did they stand in need of his teaching, having brought it with them to these islands in the earliest ages, when the Celtæ came from the East. “The story of Pythagoras having visited the Northern Druids is so improbable in itself, and so ill supported by evidence,” says Brucker, “that it may be dismissed without particular examination.”

Now it is known and allowed that the Druids had their mysteries and their solemn initiations. These mysteries even the Rev. Mr. Oliver does not attempt to accuse of any inde-

cencies ; on the contrary, explaining certain mystic expressions used by the Bards respecting them, his words are—"That the austerities of initiation might humanize and improve the heart, and elicit the fruits of morality and virtue."

The same author has beautifully observed,—“It is true that Masonry is not confined exclusively to Christianity, but embraces all that is great and good in every religion under the sun.” What is there then, we would ask, that should prevent the virtuous Druids, who believed in all the leading points of Christianity—we speak advisedly—and whose faith and practice bore the stamp of an inflexible and rigid morality, from being good and perfect Masons ? Nothing, we answer, under heaven !

“Religion, or the genuine worship of God, was the chief object of Masonic practice in the primitive ages,” says our enlightened Brother Oliver ; and that the One true God was the chief worship of the Druids, may be further shown by the very name of one of their sacred islands,—I-colm-kill, or Iona. Its ancient name was I, Hé, Avé, (as written in the annals of Ulster,) which were Latinized into Hyona, or Iona. It was also called Inis Druineach, or the Island of the Druids. This island is often called I, by itself ; this is, in fact, the I E of the Jews, and the E I of the god Apollo at Delphi, and the A N or O N of the temple in Egypt, put together to form Ian, with the Latin termination of Ianus. *An* is the self-existing One ; and *Ie*, or *Jan*, the self-existing *Jah*, or *Jehovah*, and amounts, in fact, to the I AM THAT I AM. Let the Royal Arch Mason pause on this.

The Cabiri were worshipped in the British Isles with the same rites as they were in Samothrace, says Aylett Sammes ; and O'Brien, speaking of the Mithratic caves in Ireland, says, “The mysteries celebrated within the recesses of these caverns, were precisely of that character which are called FREE-MASONIC, or Cabiric.” The same writer, giving a description of a splendid heathen cross in Ireland, observes, “Further up are other emblems of mythological allusion ; while in the centre above, you behold a Cabiric priest, alias a Free-Mason, holding the implements of his craft—a high honour—in his hand.”

Did there want further confirmation, it may be found in the old Irish legend of Gobhan SAER, collected by Mr. Petries, and retailed by O'Brien, who observes, that the very name assigned to the hero of this tale, "is that of a *class*, not of an individual. Gobhan Saer means the sacred Poet, or the Free-Mason Sage, one of the Gaubhres or Cabiri, and such as you have seen represented upon the Tuath-de-danaan cross at Clonmacnoise. To that colony, therefore, must he have belonged; and therefore the towers, traditionally associated with his erection, must have been constructed anterior to the Scythian influx."

The supposed wandering of the Cabiri, considered by some learned men to have been the sons of Shem, for the purpose of establishing *innovating* Lodges, and overwhelming the science of Masonry with an incongruous mass of superstition, is—we must tell Brother Oliver, much as we respect his talents, learning, and research,—a wild and gratuitous theory, utterly void of all respectable authority. The Cabiri, unde Abiri, were the three Powerful Ones,—not mortals, but the ancient Triad,—the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer; or Wisdom, Love, and Power. In Egypt,—Nethhe, Isis, and Osiris; in India,—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.

The very commencement of Brother Oliver's *History of Initiation* asserts, that Free-Masonry is not only of the highest antiquity, but that it was purely a religious Order. Of this there can be no doubt, and consequently it must have embraced the priesthood; it therefore follows, that the Druids, being the priests of one of the earliest nations on earth, must have been thoroughly acquainted with the Institution, and brought it with them, as we have said before, into Britain.

"The first name given to this body was *Saer*, which has three significations: firstly, *Free*; secondly, *Mason*; and thirdly, *Son of God*. In no language could those several imports be united but in the original one, viz.—IRISH. The Hebrews express only one branch of it by *Aliben*; while the English join together the other two."—(O'Brien.)

And now, be it remembered, that Druidism and its rites lingered in this island ages after the introduction of Chris-

tianity. Davies, speaking of Y Meineu Herion, a circle on one of the loftiest heights of Snowdon, says, "Such was the sanctuary which was held sacred to Ceridwen and Llywy, or *Ceres* and *Proserpine*, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY, an age in which the honours of those characters were not forgotten; for we have plainly seen that their *Mysteries*, strange as the fact may appear, were still celebrated, not only with toleration, but also under the patronage of the British princes." Here we see then, beyond all contradiction, that the Cabiric or Masonic Mysteries were celebrated in Wales, and patronised by Christian princes, who were no doubt among the initiated, down even to the reign of our English Stephen!

And now what were these Cabiric rites? Were they a mass of depravity and superstition, degrading to the honourable name of our noble Order?

"Eleus the place, and Eleusinian descriptive of the mysteries therein solemnized, were both denominated in honour of the *Advent*, which all nations awaited. Under the name of Proserpine was typified the *Virgin*, which was to conceive and bare a son."—(*O'Brien*.) Among the Gauls, who sent their sons hither to be instructed in all the learning and mysteries of the British Druids ages before Christianity, in the district of Chartres, a festival was celebrated in honour of the Virgin,—*Virgini parituræ*.—(*Vide Pillout Hist. des Celtes*, t. iii., p. 51.

In the year 1747, a Mithratic monument was found at Oxford, on which was exhibited a female nursing an infant. Dr. Stukeley, in his dissertation on this piece of antiquity, says, "It is a memorial of the birth of Mithra in the night of light." We all know that Mithra was the second person of the heathen Trinity,—the Mediator, the Saviour. The same Virgin and Child may be seen among the Etruscan antiquities in Gorius; and Epiphanius asserts, that the prophecy "*Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium*," was known to the ancient Egyptians. It was this knowledge of an expected Redeemer, a crucified Saviour, with which, as Dr. Stukeley very justly observes, the Druids were acquainted, that led them to erect in the secret recesses of their groves, the sacred Cross, inscribed with their names of the Triune Deity. The Sybilline verses were no Christian

forgery, as some have imagined, for they embodied the doctrines and belief propagated in the Mysteries of the whole Gentile world.

What true Mason, then, would be ashamed to acknowledge himself the successor of these venerable and learned Druids? So far from being any degradation, as some have supposed, to Free-Masonry to be derived from the ancient Mysteries, we believe it to be one of its greatest honours, proclaiming incontestibly its exceeding high antiquity, to which it would otherwise have a very doubtful claim. But Masonry being decidedly Christian in its principles, and allowing what we have clearly proved, namely—that the Mysteries of the Druids had a reference to an *expected* Saviour, the whole chain of connexion shines out in its full brightness from that link to which we are joined, down, through all time, to that which is united to the very gates of Paradise. It is in this way, and in no other, that we can clearly perceive,—to use again the words of Brother Oliver, “that Christianity, or the system of salvation through a crucified Mediator, was the main pillar of Free-Masonry ever since the fall.”

Nor are we singular in our opinion of the source from whence our Order is derived. Capt. Smith, who in 1783 was P. G. M. for the county of Kent, but without much knowledge of the real import of the ancient Mysteries, says, in his *Use and Abuse of Free-Masonry*,—“The Druids, when they committed any thing to writing, used the Greek alphabet; and I am bold to assert, that the most perfect remains of the Druids’ rites and ceremonies are preserved in the customs and ceremonies of the Masons, that are to be found existing among mankind.”

For ourselves, we feel proud to be an humble member of a brotherhood, which we firmly believe to be a faithful representative of that once-powerful Order—the Cabiric Druids, who were so illustrious for their learning, their arts and sciences, their morality and their virtue, and whose secret worship, as the Rev. Canon Bowles declares, was of one infinite God of all. (See *Hermes Britannicus*.)

If Free-Masonry be *not* derived from the Druids, how came

we in possession of it? Answer us that. It must have been brought to these islands at some period, and by whom? Has any one ever heard that the Essenes, who were, according to Mr. Oliver, its sole preservers, came here at any time and established the first Lodges? or were the dispersed and persecuted Jews, after their appearance in Britain, its earliest promulgators? Neither, we think, will for a moment be maintained. Had the fugitive Jews been its only possessors, the secrets of Masonry had never been divulged to the hated and oppressing Christian, but have continued solely in their own bosoms to the present day. Besides, St. Alban was a Mason, and he expired as a martyr ages previous to their arrival on these shores.

We know of another course by which some may be weak enough to imagine that Masonry first came hither. The Phœnicians traded for a long period to these "Fortunate Isles" of the West. Now it seems that Hiram, king of Tyre, (and the Tyrians, be it remembered, were all heathens,) "became Grand-Master of Masons within his dominions, and erected many stately edifices, which improved his subjects in architecture, and gained them the fame of being the best operative Masons."—(*Antiq. of Mas.*) How Brother Oliver obtained the information that King Hiram was the Grand-Master of Phœnicia, we cannot divine; nor do we think he found it in the fragments of Sanchoniathon. No matter. To combat the opinion, if such an opinion exist, that the Phœnicians, during their visits to Britain, taught the Druids Masonry, would be to fight with a shadow. The principles of Lux, or Masonry, being founded on the acknowledgment of one only Supreme Being, the Druids must have possessed the secrets of true Masonry ages before the Phœnicians appeared on these shores, for we have clearly shown that their religion was patriarchal. Moreover, we will take upon us to *prove* that the Druids did possess the TRUE LIGHT, from Brother Oliver's own assertions, granting them, *for the sake of argument*, to be correct. For he tells us, that "Pythagoras purified the mysteries of his own country from their abominations by the use of Lux, and that he instructed the Druids in Britain." So, in either case,

the Druids in this island must have been good and honest Masons.

But we should like to be informed if Pythagoras also pilgrimaged so far north-west as Ireland, to instruct her sages in the knowledge of Masonry. Verily, if he did, he must have gone there ages before he was born!

Now Balaam,—who assumed, as was the custom of many others of the ancient priesthood, particularly among the Britons, the name of his god Baal, the sun, the visible emblem of the Deity,—was, as Brother Oliver assures us, “the Master of a Lodge that adhered strictly to the precepts of Lux and the patriarchal worship.” That this Balaam was also a Druid diviner and priest, is beyond the power of scepticism to deny; for the Canaanites, in their dresses, war-chariots, hill-cities or fortifications, altars, temples, and sacrifices, were precisely similar to the ancient Britons. He commanded seven altars or high-places to be built, corresponding to the seven *trilithons* or lofty altars, which, according to the learned King, once stood at Stonehenge. (Vide *Muni. Antiq.*) “And Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram.” After several removals, Balak brought Balaam to the top of PEOR. “And Balaam said unto Balak, build me *here* seven altars,” &c. To whom were these altars at Baal-Peor erected? The Baal-Peor of the Scriptures was the Baal-Phearagh of Ireland, and the copulative Deity of the amative universe. The worship of this Baal, then, was the worship of Budh, indiscriminately implying the Lingham and the Sun, and in its primitive state representing the worship of Him who is the author of nature, and the restorer of all things. And, according to the relation in the Bible, the true Deity, under all these figures and symbols, was known and adored by Balaam, even as, by that Druid prophet’s brotherhood, he was worshipped in the far distant islands of Britain. Now mark the language of this heathen seer: “He hath said, which heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open,—I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall

rise out of Israel," &c. Here, again, is a manifest allusion to the subject of the prophecy of Zoroaster, to the expectation of that Redeemer who was to die the death of the cross, of whom so much is spoken in Sanscrit lore, and the symbol of whose expiation was portrayed in the sacred caverns of India, the temples of Egypt, and the groves of Britain.

Having thus far, we imagine, fully proved the ancient Druids to have been true and worthy Masons, the questions naturally arise,—through what channels did their rites descend to us, and by whom? and at what period were they changed to their present form? for that changed they have been, it is impossible to deny. Yes; they have been stripped of a portion of their Druidical ornaments, though many symbols of the remotest antiquity still remain, and arrayed in comparatively modern Jewish trappings. Could it even be proved, which it never can, that the direct successors of Solomon brought Freemasonry to this island, still it would not militate in the least against our assertion of the changes in Masonry.

No one, we presume, acquainted with the secrets of the Craft, will, if he reflect for a moment, maintain that our initiations from a M. M. to the highest degrees in the Order, can by any possibility be the same as the initiations of Solomon and Hiram Abiff, to descend no further down the dim course of time to its shadowy fountain, simply because it is utterly impossible that the forms and ceremonies used at their induction to the sacred Mysteries, could have borne the slightest allusion to things and scenes which happened to themselves subsequent to their being perfect Masons.

A brother, raised to the sublime degree of M. M., will perfectly comprehend what we mean, and it is not our intention to enlighten the darkness of the *exoteric*. This is another undeniable proof, if needed, that Masonry did not descend to us from the Jews, or the Essenes of Egypt, those respected preservers of its secrets; for had such been the fact, and they had cherished it in their bosoms in a pure and direct line from the days of the wise king of Israel, our initiations must have been precisely similar in form and kind to those which Solomon and Hiram Abiff themselves passed through.

We shall now advance a theory, which we consider to be perfectly original; and though we freely allow it to be *only* a theory, we trust we may be permitted to say that it is specious, and unallied to improbability. It is, that Free-Masonry, or Lux, has descended down to us from the Druidical Mysteries through the CULDEES, who succeeded the Celtic priesthood. But at what precise period, and by whom the comparatively modern change in its forms and ritual was made, we shall not presume here to determine.

But let us inquire who and what these Culdees were. Dr. Henry asserts, that the Druids had among them collegiate or monastic institutions, similar to the Pythagoreans and Cænobites, and certain it is that such institutions are to be found in the most early records of antiquity. Dr. Aickin says, that the Chaldeans and Celts were one and the same people: no wonder is it, then, that the priesthood are to be found in these islands by the name of Culdees. It appears that they succeeded to their office by *hereditary descent*, or heirship, in the church of St. Andrew's, leaving their possessions to their wives and children when they died. And in Ireland also, in the church of Armagh, where this body had great influence, there was an hereditary succession of fifteen generations.—(*Celtic Druids.*)

Huddleston has given a curious account, from the registry of the Prior of St. Andrew's, of the dedication of that church, which till then had been called Kilrimont, to St. Andrew, by King Hungus and Bishop Regulus, in the year 825. From this it appears not to have before been dedicated to any Saint. He says, that Kilrimont means temple on the King's mount. I think it probable that their bishop, Regulus, had become converted to the Roman faith, and that in consequence the monks were obliged to submit; for what could they do against their prior and the king? But they continued to perform divine worship in a certain corner of the church, after their own manner; and the register adds, "Nor could this evil be removed till the time of King Alexander, of blessed memory, in the year 1124; so that the Culdees and Popish priests performed their service in the same church for nearly three hundred years."

“The result of all the inquiries which I have made into the history of the Culdees, is, that they were *the last remains of the Druids converted to Christianity* before the Romish church got any footing in Britain. They were Pythagorean Druidical monks, probably *Essenes*; and this accounts for their early embracing Christianity, for the Essenes were as nearly Christians as possible.” (*Hist. of the Celtic Druids.*) Not, however, the Jewish Essenes of Brother Oliver, who dwelt in Egypt, but that monastic Order which, under the names of Chaldeans, Magi, Essenes, Budhists, Cabiri, Corybantes, Cænobites, Curbs, Coabs, Druids, and Culdees, were planted in brotherhoods wherever civilization was known, and who, as Higgins justly observes, were in their fundamental tenets “as nearly Christian as possible.”

“Traces of the Culdees,” we quote from Higgins, “are occasionally to be met with in different parts, both in Britain and Ireland. The last I have observed were at Ripon and York, both places almost within sight of the ancient British capital, Iseur, now Aldborough, (Isurium,) and of the famous Druidical temple at Brimham Crag. The word Iseur is curious: it signifies Saviour, from the Hebrew word *iso*, to save.

“The fact of the Culdees having succeeded by hereditary descent is extremely important. It is so very different from the practice under the Christian religion, that it tends strongly to confirm the suspicion that these people were Druids. It is nowhere to be found except where the Druids have been. Thus, in Bretagne, whose inhabitants were Celtæ and the priests Druids, it prevailed till it was abolished by Hildibert, Archbishop of Tours, in his provincial court, in 1127. In the end of the same century, Giraldus Cambrensis complains of it as one of the disgraces of Wales, (where, as well as in Ireland, the Culdees remained till his time,) that sons got the churches after their fathers by succession, and not by election, possessing and polluting the church of God by inheritance.”

It is certain that there was a monastery of Culdees at St. Andrew's in the tenth century; for Constantine III. king of Scotland, who died in 943, resigned his crown, and spent the last five years of his life in it with the Culdee monks.—(See

W. Malms. Innes' Essays, Fordun, Ingulf. Hist.) And still later, Macbeth, who began his reign in 1039, and the Lady Gruoch his wife, gave the lands of Kirkness and the manor of Bolgy to the Culdees of Lochleven.

We flatter ourselves that we have clearly shown, as far as the limits of this Dissertation will permit, that Free-Masonry, since its first establishment on earth, has never been in any danger of extinction, or its divine light, as Brother Oliver would have us believe, so burnt out, as to be well nigh extinguished. We have also, though briefly, shown that the ancient Mysteries, so far from being a sink of depravity and pollution, revealed the purest doctrines and the most sublime truths to the *esoteric*, shadowed forth in scenic representations; that the Druid or Cabiric rites were Masonic; that they were continued down by the Druids to so late a period as must astonish many of our readers; and that when the advent of the Son of the Virgin, adumbrated forth in those Mysteries, had been accomplished, the Druid Hierophant became the Christian priest.

And his sons and *hereditary* successors in the sacred office,—who were they? Why, as clearly as the sun at noon, the Culdees; who surely did not, when they embraced Christianity, cast away the noble institution of Masonry, which had so long, amid their deep recesses, been revered as the Ark of their Covenant, the type of their redemption, and the shadow of all their tropes of blessedness hereafter. They surely did not extinguish that glorious LIGHT which, though concealed beneath a veil impenetrable to the uninitiated, had shed from age to age its resplendent beams on the worthy and the good, like the visible image of that God they worshipped, which, amid the azure pavilion of the skies, is ever, to the Masonic sons of Light, in its meridian glory.

No; that splendour which, since it was first lit by the Great Architect had never been put out, was united with the New Day which the Star in the East had ushered in,—with the “Sun of Righteousness, which arose with healing under his wings,” to illuminate and gladden the long-expecting nations of the whole earth.

Is not, then, our theory probable? nay, more than probable? Yes; and we will go yet further, and assert it to be our belief

that these Culdees not only preserved, cherished, and transmitted the Masonic secrets of their forefathers to succeeding times, but that they were the persons who divested them of many long and severe probations, of many terrific ceremonies, and gave them that sublime and simple form which they now assume. Considered in this view,—and in no other can we trace Masonry through the eternal changes of revolving periods,—there is nothing left on earth which can be brought into competition with its vast antiquity. Neither will it be forgotten, that a new light is thrown on Christianity by this view, which proves it to have been coeval with mankind, and as old as the world.

We have wandered with that amiable, learned, and excellent Mason, Brother Oliver, in quest of the SAER or LUX,*—often, we are compelled to say, notwithstanding the shining abilities of our guide, in mazy darkness, doubt, and uncertainty,—from the plains of Shinar to Egypt and Palestine, from Greece to Rome, and from Balaam's Lodge to Solomon's Temple, where he has left us in utter darkness as to all that followed. But let us once grant the Druids to have been the possessors of our sacred Institution, and the Culdees the connecting link of that chain which unites us to those venerable patriarchs, and, through them, to the remotest periods of antiquity, and the divine LIGHT, like the ethereal flame of heaven, its visible image, rolls on from the far-most East to the utmost bounds of the West, from the earliest era to the present hour, in one continuous, undiminished, and undying stream of glory.

* Antiquities of Free-Masonry.

THE END.

CRITICAL OPINIONS OF THE FIRST SERIES

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CRITICAL OPINIONS OF THE FIRST SERIES.

romantic interest, and for the most part with historic accuracy. On the whole, we are convinced that there is in Mr. Pennie's mind deep thought, aided by profound study. His versification is smooth and harmonious, rising not unfrequently into the grand and the noble, and exhibiting throughout an amiability and charity alike creditable to the man and the Christian. We shall hail his future productions with real pleasure."—*The Cambrian Quarterly Magazine*.

"The author of this volume has undertaken a task, which required such an investigation of the manners and customs of the ancient Britons and Anglo-Saxons, as nothing but the utmost labour of research and enduring perseverance could have succeeded in producing. He seems, however, to have been fully aware of the magnitude of the attempt, and in proportion to the difficulties he had to contend with, he has evinced a mind stored with the requisites necessary to accomplish what may be justly termed a National Work. We should be highly pleased to see Mr. Pennie's Tragedies take the place on our stage of some of those historical Dramas which are now produced; many of which, although exhibiting talent, cannot cause that interest and excitement which the scenes in these Dramas, connected with the history of our native land, must ever create."—*Western Luminary*.

"We hear that it is the intention of Mr. Pennie, well known as the author of the *Royal Minstrel*, &c. to publish a second series of Britain's Historical Drama. The first series, dedicated by express permission to his late Majesty King William IV., has been some time before the public, who have thus had an opportunity of seeing the plan of the work, and also the extraordinary poetical talents which its author possesses. After the many encomiums which have been lavished on him by the great and the learned, our feeble praise can hardly be needed; yet we cannot refrain from pronouncing our decided opinion, that the Historical Drama is the production of a mind replete with learning and poetical vigour. The publication of the second series depends, we believe, upon the number of Subscribers, and most sincerely do we hope the number required may be obtained, that the public be not deprived of a work of intrinsic merit, and of great originality both in design and execution."—*The Salisbury and Wiltshire Herald*.

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